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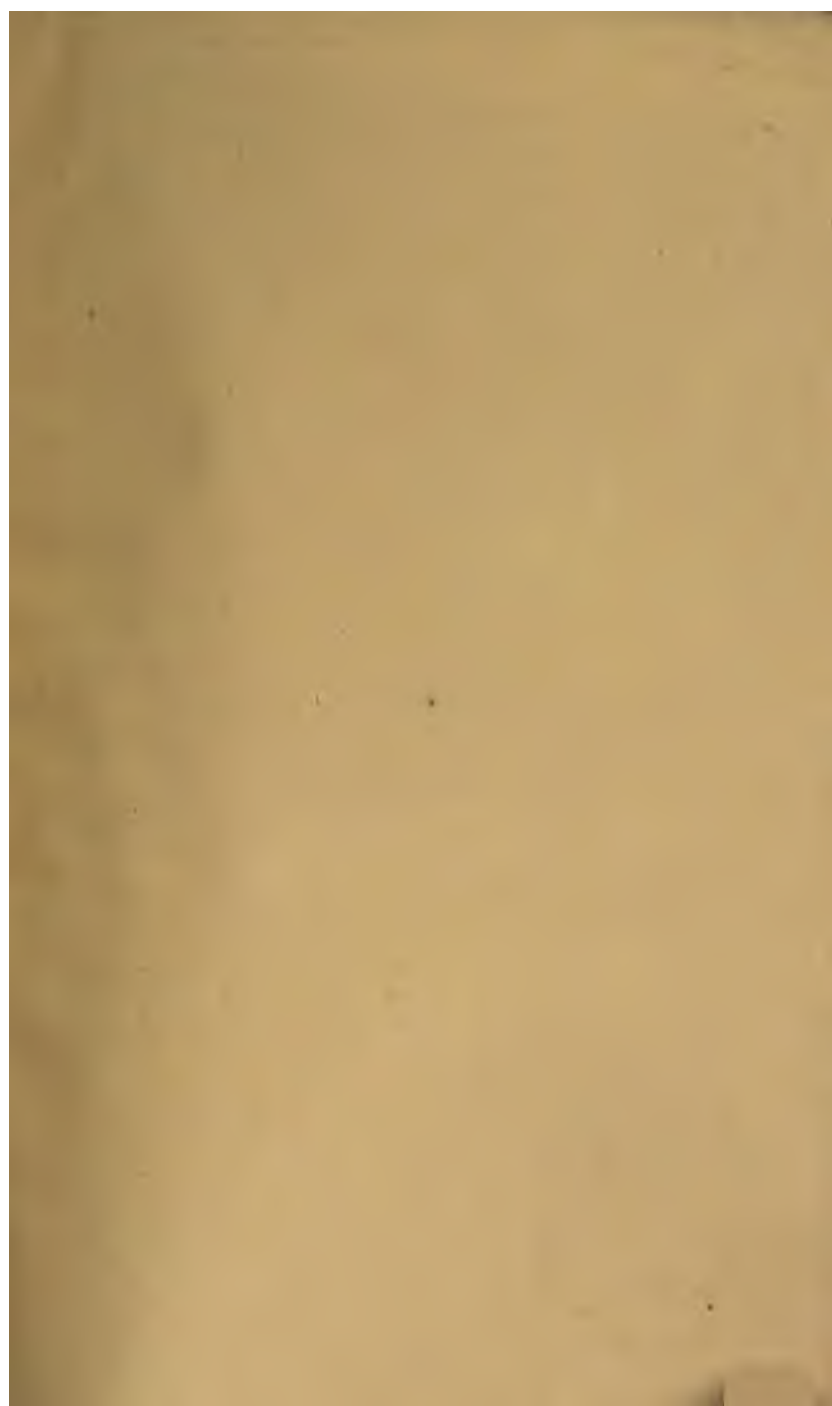




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**ADVENTURES**  
**OF**  
**SUSAN HOPLEY.**  
**VOLUME II.**



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ADVENTURES

OF

S U S A N   H O P L E Y ;

OR,

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :  
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# SUSAN HOPLEY.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

THE STORY OF JULIA'S PARENTS CONTINUED.

“WHEN Julie awoke on the following morning, her eye immediately sought the portmanteau. ‘You are my compass,’ said she, as she looked at it, ‘and I must not lose sight of you. I wish I could get a peep at the inside—who knows but I might make further discoveries. If I could but learn the name of the owner, it might not be difficult to discover in what relation he stands to Mr. Bruneau. Bruneau!’ she repeated, rising on her elbow as the thought struck her. ‘R. B., Rodolphe Bruneau! Oh ciel! then perhaps it’s his son! How dreadful

if it be so—and for me to be the means of bringing such a tragedy to light! I tremble at the idea of moving further in the business—and yet Valentine must be saved, and vindicated, be the consequences to others what they may;’ and with this determination she arose, and having adjusted her toilet as well as she could by a bit of broken glass that hung against the wall, she descended to the room below.

“Rodolphe was not to be seen; but the old woman was busily engaged preparing coffee for two of the men who had been there on the preceding evening.

“‘Ah, bon jour, Monsieur!’ said they on Julie’s appearance, ‘what, you have passed the night here?’

“‘And slept well, I hope,’ added the hostess.

“‘Never better,’ returned Julie. ‘Your bed is a capital one.’

“‘Voulez vous du café?’ said the old woman.

“Julie accepted the offer; and a basin of coffee with a slice of bread being placed before each of the party, they sat amicably sipping their breakfast around the hearth.

“‘Is there any thing new this morning?’ inquired Julie of the artizan.

“‘Nothing, that I have heard,’ replied he.

“‘Nothing more about the assassination you mentioned last night?’ said Julie; and before the words had passed her lips she repented of her rashness, and resolved to allude to the subject no more; for she was conscious of blushing, and felt that the old woman’s eye was upon her.

“‘Only that the assassin is an Englishman,’ replied the artizan, ‘and supposed to be the agent of another.’

“Her fear of exciting suspicion induced her to turn the conversation after this, and the subject was introduced no more. The men soon took their leave; other parties dropped in, and took their morning refreshment of a basin of coffee, and departed in their turn; whilst Julie still sat in the corner of the chimney, not knowing very well what to do next.

“In the first place, she had a great objection to going out, and walking the streets whilst the daylight lasted, in her present attire; and in the second place, she was terribly afraid of losing sight of the portmanteau. On the other hand, sitting there all day might appear strange, and excite surprise; besides that, she was anxious to set on foot some inquiries about Mr. Bruneau and his connexions, which might forward her discoveries. But irresolution and fear

conquered, and still she sat on ; gazing into the fire, and feeling, rather than seeing, the glances of wonder and curiosity that the hostess cast upon her, ever and anon, as she passed backwards and forwards about her avocations.

“ ‘Comment ?’ said she at length, ‘you don’t go out, and the sun shining so bright.’

“ Julie shook her head sadly, and answered, ‘No.’

“ ‘Bah !’ said the old woman, ‘take courage. You musn’t be cast down. If you have lost one situation, there are others to be had. You should be stirring, and look about you.’

“ ‘So I shall,’ replied Julie, ‘if I find there are no hopes of getting back to the countess, but the truth is, I have a friend in the family, who is at work for me. To-night, when it is dusk, I shall go out and inquire what hopes there are. If none, I must then turn my thoughts elsewhere.’

“ This explanation seemed sufficiently satisfactory, and no more was said on the subject, till about an hour after noon, when a hasty foot was heard approaching, and Rodolphe suddenly appeared, with a countenance that denoted considerable agitation. On seeing Julie he stopped short at the door, and the

words that were on his lips remained unuttered. He was evidently annoyed, and beckoning his mother into the passage with an impatient gesture, Julie heard him say, 'Comment, il ne bouge pas, ce polisson ?'

" 'Never mind,' answered his mother ; ' what does it signify ? He has his reasons, poor child. But what's the matter ?'

" ' He is dead !' returned Rodolphe.

" ' Jesu Maria !' exclaimed the old woman ; ' is it possible ?'

" After this the conversation was carried on in a lower key, and Julie only caught a few words here and there, amongst which *Monsieur Rodolphe*, however, frequently recurred.

" The Mousieur Rodolphe of the cabaret dined at home with her and his mother. The meal passed in silence, except that now and then an ejaculation would burst unconsciously from the old woman, the offspring of her disturbed thoughts ; whilst the son sat in gloomy abstraction, eating mechanically, without seeming to know what he was about, and only awakening from his reverie to cast, ever and anon, an impatient glance at Julie, whose absence would, evidently, have been much more agreeable than her company.

“The dinner over, after some further private colloquy with his mother, he departed; and when the evening arrived, Julie took up her hat, and telling the hostess she was now going to ascertain what chance she had of recovering her situation, and that she should return to sup and sleep, she sallied into the street.

“Her first business was to direct her steps homewards, in order to relieve the anxiety she did not doubt Madeleine was feeling, and to learn if there were any tidings of her father’s return.

“‘Ciel!’ cried Madeleine, as soon as she saw her, ‘what a night I have passed! Do you know, that if you had not come back before midnight, I had resolved to go to the police, and send them in search of you.’

“‘Beware of doing any such thing,’ returned Julie. ‘For my part, I have passed the night in a comfortable bed, and I believe, under an honest roof, to which I am about to return. But those with whom I am lodging, believe me to be what I appear, the Countess of Rodemont’s discarded servant. Had they the slightest suspicion of my disguise and of its motives, I cannot tell what danger I might incur. I charge you, therefore, comply strictly with my directions. I will

return here every evening when it is dark. If however, three evenings should elapse without your seeing or hearing from me, I then give you leave to go to the police, tell all you know of the causes of my disappearance, and add, that all the information you can give to aid their researches is comprised in these words—*Le Cabaret de Monsieur Rodolphe.*

“ ‘Tenez,’ said Madeleine, ‘je vais écrire ces paroles là.’

“ ‘There is no letter, nor tidings of any sort,’ continued she, in answer to Julie’s inquiries, ‘no one has been here but people to the office. I have asked every body for news of Mr. Valentine, but can learn none. Being a foreigner, nobody seems to be interested about him. Ah ! par exemple, I had forgotten—there was a demoiselle here last night—’

“ ‘A young lady,’ exclaimed Julie, ‘was she handsome ?’

“ ‘Yes, she was,’ returned Madeleine,—‘une jolie blonde—’

“ ‘Fair, was she ?’ said Julie.

“ ‘Yes,’ replied Madeleine—‘blonde—douce—petite—she wept bitterly, poor thing—’

“ ‘Ah,’ said Julie, ‘elle pleurera, mais elle n’agira pas. But what did she come for ?’

“ ‘Simply to learn what we could tell her of Mr. Valentine !’

“ ‘But you could tell her nothing ?’

“ ‘Nothing, but that he was imprisoned for an assassination, which she knew before. Then she asked if she could see Monsieur Le Moinet but I said he was from home ; so she went away in tears. *Pauvre petite !*’

“ ‘*N’importe,*’ said Julie. ‘But, Madeleine, where is my father’s little portmanteau ? did he take it with him ?’

“ ‘No,’ replied Madeleine, ‘he took the large one—the little one is here.’

“ ‘Then fetch me the key of it,’ said Julie.

“This done, Julie having repeated her cautions and directions to Madeleine, bade her good night, and took her way to the prison, where she rang the bell, and begged to speak to the gaoler. The man who had let her in the day before, presented himself at the gate, but he said all access to the prisoner was forbidden. ‘But you could take a message?’ said Julie, slipping a piece of money into his hand.

“ ‘Un petit mot, peut-être,’ replied the gaoler.

“ ‘*Ecoutez,*’ said Julie, in a low voice, ‘*je suis le page d’une grande et belle dame,*’ and she placed her finger on her lip, to imply that there was a secret—‘you understand ?’

"The gaoler nodded his head significantly.

"'If,' continued she, 'you treat your prisoner well, she will remember you. In the mean while, tell him, to keep up his spirits. That those are at work for him that know he is innocent; and who will not rest till they have brought the guilty to justice.'

"'Bien,' returned the gaoler, 'there is no harm in telling him that.'

"'None,' replied Julie, 'so good night! we shall rely on you. Mais, par exemple, I forgot; has any one been here to see him?'

"'Oui,' answered the gaoler, 'premièrement, une jolie demoiselle.'

"'But she did not see him?'

"'Yes, she did,' answered the gaoler.

"'A fair girl was she?' inquired Julie, eagerly; 'little, too.'

"'No, no,' returned the gaoler, 'une belle brune, tall, and well made.'

"'Perhaps it was yesterday,' said Julie, beginning to perceive it was herself he spoke of.

"'Yesterday,' answered the gaoler, 'before orders came to admit nobody.'

"'Any one else?' asked Julie.

"'There came a man here last night,' replied the gaoler, 'to make inquiries who the prisoner

was—his name, and where he lived, and so forth.’

“‘A man in a blue mantle?’ inquired Julie.

“‘*Précisément,*’ answered the gaoler, ‘in a blue mantle, and a hat low on his brow. I couldn’t distinguish his face.’

“‘Adieu, and remember,’ said she, as she turned away, adding to herself, ‘that was Monsieur Rodolphe.’

At that moment she heard a voice behind her say, ‘Yes, it’s him, assuredly. One can’t mistake the livery.’

“She looked back to see who the words proceeded from, and caught a glimpse of two men crossing the street; but the imperfect light did not permit her to distinguish who they were.

“‘Heaven forbid it should be Monsieur Rodolphe!’ said she; but she did not think it was. Certainly, neither of the persons wore a cloak, nor did it appear to be his voice. ‘Now to visit Monsieur Bruneau’s,’ she added, and forthwith directed her steps to the scene of the mysterious murder.

“‘I am sent,’ said she, her summons on the bell being answered by a female servant, ‘to inquire how Monsieur Bruneau is.’

“‘Il est mort, le pauvre homme,’ answered the woman, shaking her head. ‘He died this morning from the effects of his wound. Or rather from the fright; for the doctor says that the wound was not mortal, but that the terror, and getting no assistance for so many hours, has killed him.’

“‘Le pauvre homme!’ exclaimed Julie. ‘How sorry my mistress will be!’

“‘She knew him, your mistress?’ said the woman.

“‘Intimately, I believe,’ replied Julie, ‘at least, I judge so, from the concern she expressed. Ah! par exemple, she also desired me to inquire about Monsieur—Monsieur—something Bru-neau—Mon Dieu! I forgot—but it must be his son, I fancy.’

“‘He has no son,’ answered the woman. ‘His nephew, perhaps, Monsieur Ernest.’

“‘That was not the name,’ replied Julie—who felt that, somehow or other, there was such a mystery attached to the awful name of Rodolphe, that she could hardly shape her lips to bring it out. ‘No,’ said she, musingly, as if trying to remember, ‘I’m sure that was not the name—is there not another—a Monsieur—Monsieur—Rodolphe.’

“‘I know of no other,’ returned the woman. ‘It must have been Mr. Ernest you were told to inquire for. He is sent for, and will be here to-morrow, we expect.’”

“Julie’s efforts to extract any information more to her purpose proved quite ineffectual—it was evident the woman told all she knew, and that she knew nothing likely to be of any service; so there was nothing left, for the present, but to return to the cabaret, and follow out her perquisitions there.

“Some of the visitors of the preceding evening were already seated round the hearth; and the old woman, who received her cheerfully enough, placed a chair for her in the corner as before. She had scarcely, however, thrown off her hat, and taken possession of it, before Monsieur Rodolphe entered the room. His eye darted on her with a scrutinising glance as he advanced and took his seat beside her, and there was that in his countenance that made her think of the words she had heard whilst she was talking to the gaoler. Her heart quailed at the possibility of his having overheard the conversation, and she turned away her face that he might not read the confusion she was conscious it betrayed.

“The first words that were addressed to her

were not calculated to diminish it. 'It was you, I think, we saw talking to some one at the prison gate as we came along,' said one of the men to her.

" 'Me? no,' said she, with as much firmness as she could command, 'I have not been in that quarter.'

" 'C'est singulier!' said the man, 'I could have sworn it was you.'

" 'And I too,' rejoined another.

" 'The livery perhaps deceived you,' said she; 'but the Countess has more pages than one.'

" 'No doubt that was it,' returned the man, appearing satisfied with the explanation.

" Julie stole a glance at the old woman, who went on knitting her stocking, seeming to take no notice of what had been said; but as Monsieur Rodolphe sat beside her, she could not look at his face without turning her head directly towards him, which she had not courage to do. However, he said nothing—indeed, he seemed, as far as she could judge of him, to be habitually a silent and abstracted man, and on this evening he was more than usually taciturn. She was silent, too, from anxiety, and the fear that she felt returning as night approached, and the mystery thickened round her. She called

for wine, and shared it with the company as she had done the night before ; the strangers and the old woman chatted familiarly over theirs, whilst she sipped hers, with her looks fixed on the log of wood that smouldered on the hearth ; and ever and anon catching, from the corner of her eye a side view of Monsieur Rodolphe's legs, which were stretched out and crossed before him in an attitude, the immobility of which, combined with his rigid silence filled her with awe.

“She felt a growing inclination to throw up her enterprise, and leave the house at once ; but she had not courage to announce a resolution that from its suddenness must appear strange and excite curiosity. She was yet meditating on the possibility of taking her departure with the other visitors, when they rose and took up their hats—she advanced to the table where her own lay, when she recollected that the preliminary step to going away was to pay her bill, and before she could have done that, or even have learned its amount, the strangers were gone, and she found herself alone with the mother and son.

“*“Voulez vous souper ?”* inquired the old woman.

“‘Certainly,’ answered Julie with assumed cheerfulness; ‘I am exceedingly hungry.’

“‘And have you good news?’ rejoined the hostess. ‘Will the Countess receive you again?’

“‘I think she will,’ returned Julie; ‘I am to hear positively to-morrow.’

“‘C’est bien,’ said the old woman, ‘je vous en felicite,’ and she broke her eggs, and tossed up her omlette, and spread her table, every now and then murmuring ‘Dieu!’ as she stumbled over Monsieur Rodolphe’s extended legs; whilst he sat with his hands in his pockets, his lips compressed, and his eyes as fixed as if he were in a cataleptic fit; Julie the while, walking about the room, catching stolen glances at his portentous face, wondering how she was to swallow the supper with a throat as dry as a dusty road in August; and in spite of love and jealousy, ardently wishing herself safe at home with Madeleine.

“Many’s the time that love has conquered fear, even in the most timid breasts, as it had thus far done in poor Julie’s—she must be forgiven if fear for a short time gained the ascendant, and the heroine sunk into the woman.

## CHAPTER XX.

THE STORY OF JULIA'S PARENTS CONTINUED.

"It was on the morning of the fourth day after Julie's visits to Madeleine, the gaol, and Monsieur Bruneau's, as related in the last Chapter, that a woman, *toute éplorée*, as she was described by those who saw her, demanded an interview with the Lieutenant of Police, and was admitted to the private sanctuary of that astute official.

"From the duration of the audience, her information was judged to be important; the more especially, as when she departed, the Lieutenant himself conducted her to the door, and was overheard strictly charging her to observe an inviolable silence till she heard from him: 'further,' said he, 'you will not come here by daylight, but in the dusk of the even-

ing, unless the communication you have to make is urgent, and then you will muffle your head in a shawl, and avoid observation as much as possible.'

"She was no sooner departed than the Lieutenant summoned to his presence a man called Simon, whom he generally employed on occasions that demanded particular adroitness or sagacity.

" 'Do you,' said he, 'know of a cabaret kept by a man called Rodolphe?'

" 'There is no such name in my list,' replied Simon.

" 'I was afraid not,' said the Lieutenant; 'the name is doubtless fictitious.'

" 'May I ask what is the affair in hand?' said Simon.

" 'It appears,' returned the Lieutenant, 'that five days ago a young lady, in short the daughter of the notary in the Rue de Mousseline, that the Englishman lived with, he who is in prison for the assassination of Bruneau—'

" 'Le Moine,' said Simon.

" 'Exactly,' returned the Lieutenant. 'Well, it appears that five days ago this young person left her home in the disguise of a page—she wore the livery of Rodemont, which her servant,

the woman who was here just now, procured for her. On the following evening she returned, charged the servant to make no inquiries about her, unless three evenings elapsed without her appearing—that she might then come here and apply for assistance ; but that all the indication she could give was comprised in the words, ‘ *Le cabaret de Monsieur Rodolphe*,’—the woman thinks she would not be more precise in her information, lest she, the servant, either from curiosity or apprehension, should follow her to the place of her concealment, and either betray her, or disappoint her plans ;—finally she went away, taking with her the key of a small portmanteau, and has not since been heard of. The prescribed period having elapsed, the woman, who is naturally under the greatest alarm, has come to give information of the circumstances.’

“ ‘Does she know nothing of her motive?’ asked Simon. ‘Is it an intrigue?’

“ ‘That is the most curious part of the story,’ replied the Lieutenant. ‘It appears that she is in love with the young Englishman her father’s clerk, and that her enterprise is somehow connected with the accusation brought against him. The servant says, that by certain words she dropped, she gathered that she, the young lady,

whose name, by the by, is Julie—Julie Le Moine, is not only aware of the young man's innocence, but knows also who is the real criminal—and it seems that on the night of the murder, she was absent from her home for some hours. The servant does not know exactly when she went, being herself in bed, but she returned soon after three o'clock ; she then lay down, but arose at dawn of day, went out again, and was absent about an hour and a half.'

" 'Diable ! c'est singulier !' exclaimed Simon, knitting his brows.

" 'Now,' said the Lieutenant, 'the first step is to find out the cabaret of Monsieur Rodolphe—mais, tout doucement—car—'

" 'Undoubtedly,' said Simon, filling up the pause of his principal—'for they have probably found out that she knows too much ; and if they have not silenced her already—which is to be feared, they will be apt to do it in the panic, if our perquisitions are heard of.'

" 'At the same time,' added the Lieutenant, 'there is no time to lose, delay may be as fatal as too much precipitation.'

" 'Fiez vous à moi, mon chef,' said Simon, taking up his hat. 'You'll be pleased to give me twenty francs.'

“The money was given, and Simon took his leave. ‘Le—ca—ba—ret—de—Mon—sieur—Ro—dolphe—’ murmured he to himself, as he directed his steps to his own lodging, which was hard by, and attired himself in the dress of a mechanic. ‘Premièrement,’ continued he taking out his list of the numerous cabarets in Nantes, ‘it is not *that*—they are honest people—I know them;—nor *that*;—nor *that*,’—and so he ran his finger down the list till he came to the name of Lobau—Jacques Lobau, rue de Maille—ah,’ continued he, ‘I’ll mark you Jacques Lobau—I’ve observed Garnier the *escroc*, and others of that fraternity, going in and out of your house very familiarly lately—and on Sunday last, I saw Madame Lobau, as she calls herself, in a pair of ear-rings that were never purchased by the sale of vin ordinaire, and bonne bière de Mars.—Robineau—Pierre Robineau—Mauvais sujet—connected with smugglers and thieves—there’s a mark for you, Robineau.—Grimaud—La Mère Grimaud—bonne femme, la mère Grimaud, so report says. Mais tenez, didn’t I hear she had a son,—marker at a billiard table—a fellow that dressed above his means, and would never settle to any thing?—he may demoralise the

house—that must be looked to—’ and having run through his list, and marked the suspected houses with a cross, Simon sallied forth on his mission of discovery.

“He had not gone far from the police-office, where he had called to ask some questions that had occurred to him with respect to Madeleine’s evidence, when he was surprised by seeing advancing towards him the very person, at least, so it appeared to him, that he was in search of—a young lad of about fifteen or sixteen, with dark hair and eyes, and wearing the Rodemont livery. The boy advanced straight to the police-office, and entered, followed by Simon, who had turned to watch his motions, and was close at his heels.

“‘I am come to make a complaint to the Lieutenant of Police,’ said the youth.

“‘Then you will come this way,’ said Simon, who immediately conducted him into the presence of his chief.

“‘You have succeeded already?’ exclaimed the Lieutenant to Simon.

“‘I believe so,’ replied Simon, ‘but it’s by accident. I met this young person not a hundred yards from the door.’

“‘I am come,’ said the lad not waiting to

be questioned, 'to complain of a woman who borrowed of me a suit of clothes; for a few hours, she said; but she has now had them nearly a week, and I cannot get her to return them, nor give any account of what she has done with them.'

"'Ah! I understand,' replied the Lieutenant, nodding his head to Simon, who nodded his in return, as much as to say, he understood too.

"'The worst of it is,' continued the lad, 'it was my best suit, and I shall be ruined by the loss of it. The Countess, my mistress, who discharged me about ten days ago in a fit of anger, has agreed to take me back; but if I go without my new clothes, which had been given me, they will think I have sold them; and I shall be turned out of the house again, and lose my character into the bargain.'

"'I believe,' said the Lieutenant, 'I know what is become of your clothes, and shall probably find means to recover them for you; at all events, I shall be able to satisfy the Countess that your story is true, and prevent any suspicion attaching to your character from the circumstance.'

"'If,' said Simon, 'the youth would place himself at my command for a few hours, and

abide strictly by my directions, I dare say we might recover the clothes, and he earn a louis d'or into the bargain.'

" 'André, which was the name of the young page, willingly acceded to the terms offered, the Lieutenant becoming guarantee for the payment of the money; and Simon once more set forth on his expedition, accompanied by his new ally.

" 'All I require of you is,' said Simon, 'that wherever we go, you speak as little as possible, only corroborating what I say, and that you permit me to call you *nephew*. Above all make no allusion to the loss of your clothes; nor even to your being dismissed from your service—let it simply be understood that you are in the Countess's establishment; and leave the rest to me. I shall have to call probably at various houses, at each of which I shall offer you drink; but take as little as possible at each, lest your head be affected, and you lose your discretion.'

"These preliminaries being arranged, Simon led the way to the house of Pierre Robineau, where he found a goodly company, many of whom he knew to be rogues, drinking, and playing at dominos, or morra, and other such games as form the diversion of the lower classes.

Pierre Robineau himself was amongst them, and Simon fixed his eyes intently on his countenance as he entered the room followed by the page. But there was no emotion, nor surprise; nor did the appearance of the youth seem to excite the slightest attention from any one of the party. 'It is not here,' said Simon to himself; and having called for a small measure of beer, they left the house, and proceeded to Jacques Lobau's. Jacques himself was tipsy, and took little or no notice of them; but Madame, his wife, or who passed for such, fell to ogling the handsome page, and was evidently bent on making a conquest of him. She made them more than welcome; and Simon, who felt satisfied there were no discoveries to be made there, had some difficulty in getting away, and rescuing his companion from her civilities.

"In this manner they visited one after the other the houses that Simon thought most likely to be the scene of some mysterious or illegal proceeding, but so far without the slightest indication of succeeding in his object. 'Allons!' said he, 'encore un autre,' and he turned down a narrow street and entered the cabaret of La mère Grimaud.

'There was no one in the room but an old

woman, who was at that moment on her knees gathering up with a wooden spoon a heap of barley seeds which appeared to have been accidentally spilt on the floor. As she heard the sound of Simon's foot, she looked round, and seeing, as she supposed, a customer—she said, 'Ah ! pardon, Monsieur, come in and I shall be at your service directly—I must just gather up these first, lest they be trod on.'

" 'Permit me to help you,' said André, who at that moment emerged from behind his companion, and advanced towards her.

" 'Comment ?' cried or rather screamed Madame Grimaud, 'Vous êtes—?' and there she stopped, with her mouth open : and her eyes fixed on André's face, which evidently puzzled and confounded her.

" 'Bien !' said Simon to himself—'nous voilà !'

" 'Yes,' added he, aloud, addressing the old woman, apparently willing to finish her interrupted sentence, 'yes, he is a good-natured lad, my nephew, and not at all proud, although he's in a high service. He was always taught to respect and assist the aged—were you not, André ?'

" 'Oui, mon oncle,' replied André, as he industriously collected, and poured into a basin the scattered seeds.

"By this time Madame Grimaud had recovered herself, and saw her way. She remembered that the countess might have more pages than one, or that this might be he who had replaced her late lodger; so the seeds being gathered up, she arose from her knees, composed her countenance, and inquired their pleasure.

"Simon threw himself into a seat like a man that was tired, and called for something to drink.

" 'I have walked hither,' he said, 'from Rennes to see my nephew; and I am glad to find myself at my ease in a snug cabaret. Ah! ça, Madame Grimaud,' added he, 'and you don't remember me?'

" 'No,' replied she, looking from one to the other of the visitors, and visibly perplexed how to conduct herself—'No, I don't know that I ever saw you before.'

" 'I can't wonder at it,' answered Simon, 'for I should not have known you if we had met under any other roof—but yet I have drank many a *bon coup* in this room—but it is long ago, before I went to live at Rennes. Et le bon père Grimaud, se porte-il toujours bien?'

" 'Ah, you knew him? You knew my husband?' said the old woman, brightening.

“ ‘To be sure I did,’ returned Simon. ‘How goes it with him?’

“ ‘Ah ! il est mort !’ said she, shaking her head—‘dead these seven years, come Martinmas.’

“ ‘Sacre !’ exclaimed Simon with becoming indignation, ‘comme on meurt ici ! There’s my sister, the mother of this child, and her husband gone too ; and there’s scarcely a person alive that I knew when I left it twenty years ago. And your children—you had children, I think ; it appears to me that I remember a little lad—an espiègle—?’

“ ‘Yes, I had a son,’ returned Madame Grimaud, in a more reserved manner than she had last spoken.

“ ‘Had !’ said Simon ; ‘I hope he is not dead, too ?’

“ ‘No—no,’ replied Madame Grimaud—‘oh, no ; he is not dead.’

“ ‘Then he stays to comfort your old age, I hope,’ said Simon. ‘I suppose he’s the landlord, now. I shall be glad to see him.’

“ ‘He has nothing to do with the cabaret,’ returned she drily. ‘Neither is he at present in Nantes.’

“ ‘Mon oncle,’ said André, according to the

instructions he had received, that whenever he judged from the tone of Simon's conversation that the object was attained, he was to find an excuse for going away, 'Mon oncle—it is already evening, and I fear my mistress may require my services; I shall be chided if I am absent when she calls for me.'

"'Very true,' said Simon, starting, as if suddenly awakened to the propriety of the boy's suggestion—'You had better go home immediately; and I will see you again to-morrow.'

"André took an affectionate leave of his uncle, made a bow to the hostess, and returned to the police office, as he had been previously directed, to communicate the result of their expedition to the Lieutenant.

"As the evening advanced some of the *habitués* of the house dropped in, with whom Simon drank and conversed, carefully supporting his character of a stranger; but nothing was said that tended to throw any light on the mystery, except that one of the men inquired of Madame Grimaud if her son was still absent, and another who came in afterwards repeated the inquiry,

but instead of *your son*, said, *Monsieur Rodolphe*.

“When night drew on, Simon said, being tired, he did not wish to look further for lodgings, and proposed sleeping there ; but the hostess said she could not accommodate him ; so having waited till the last of the company, he took his leave.

“As he passed up the street he made signals to three different persons who were separately lounging about within sight of the door ; one was a woman, the others had the appearance of workmen. Simon, by calling at a few of the houses where a billiard table was kept, had no difficulty in ascertaining the one to which Monsieur Rodolphe was attached ; and he there learned that the marker had been absent for two days, being as they understood, summoned to the country by the death of a relation. He next presented himself to the Lieutenant.

“‘If Mademoiselle Le Moine is alive, and still in the house,’ he said, ‘I believe her to be perfectly secure from any extreme violence, the old woman would never sanction any thing of the sort. She will perhaps consent to her detention, or to any measures that would not endanger her life, or do her bodily harm, if she

thinks it necessary to the preservation of her son ; but nothing more. But I doubt her being there. From any part of that house, which is very small, she could make herself heard—besides, I was there some time alone with Mère Grimaud, and observed nothing to indicate that there was any other person within its walls. This Rodolphe, who is probably either the assassin of Monsieur Bruneau, or concerned with him, has, no doubt, on discovering Ma'm'sellè Le Moine's suspicions, made his escape, or concealed himself. But what has become of her ? It would be easy to seize the old woman and examine her ; mais, je connais l'espèce,—we shall extract nothing from her that will implicate her son, unless she is certain he is beyond our reach. We can also search the house for the young lady, it's true ; but if we raise the alarum, this Rodolphe may slip through our fingers altogether ; or he may take desperate means to rid himself of her, in his panic. *L'affaire est delicate.*'

“‘The house is watched ?’ said the Lieutenant.

“‘Strictly,’ returned Simon, ‘no one can go in or out unobserved ; and I think I will therefore employ the next few hours in endeavouring to ascertain if any persons answering

the description of this Rodolphe have been seen leaving the city. I have contrived to obtain a pretty correct description of his appearance from the billiard rooms, without exciting any suspicion of my object ; and I almost think I could clap my hand upon him if I met him.’”

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE STORY OF JULIA'S PARENTS CONTINUED.

"ABOUT eight o'clock on the same evening that Simon paid his visit to la mère Grimaud, on the road from Le Mans to Nantes, and about ten miles from the latter city, two horsemen alighted to refresh themselves and their animals, at a small house of entertainment for travellers, whether man or beast, that stood by the road side. The wayfarers were much of the same height, age and complexion; and though there was no real resemblance of feature, there was a striking similarity in the *personnel* of the two men, a similarity which extended to their dress, both as to colour and form; both being wrapped in blue mantles, and wearing slouched hats that hung over their

brows. The attire of one of them, however, was much fresher than that of the other ; and he might be said to wear it ‘ with a difference.’ To him also seemed to belong precedence and sway, his companion falling back to allow him to pass first ; and evincing other slight marks of deference and consideration. They declined entering into the public room, but desired to be shown to a private apartment. There they took some slight refreshment, after seeing their horses attended to ; and having rested about an hour, they again mounted their steeds, and proceeded on their way.

“ ‘ I perfectly agree with you,’ said he who appeared to take the lead, after they had ridden some yards from the inn in silence ; ‘ I wish the thing could be avoided, but it cannot. Self-reservation is the first law of nature. I am quite clear, whatever may be his motive, that if I don’t take his life, he’ll take mine ; and there can be little doubt, that somehow or other, though how I can’t imagine, he is in possession of the truth, and has the means to do it. We may lay this salvo to our consciences, that it is not a death of our seeking, but of his own. Had he not thrust his head into our affairs, he might have lived on to the end of the chapter without

harm or damage from me. The whole affair, I don't deny it, is unfortunate ; and I regret it, from first to last. But since I cannot undo the past, since I cannot retrace my steps, I must wade on. I confess, of the two, I rather pity the other, the lad that's in prison, since his misfortune was not of his own seeking—this foolish boy's is ; and he must take the consequences.'

" 'Setting his interest aside,' said his companion, 'and to return to our own ; it is certainly peculiarly unfortunate that he was seen by so many people at our house. The livery is remarkable ; and if he should have any friends that think it worth their while to inquire for him, he will doubtless be traced to my mother's through the evidence of those men.'

" 'We shall probably be away before any steps of importance are taken, if ever they are,' replied the first. 'According to what you gathered from the Countess's porter, he is a *vaurien* that nobody cares for, and without friends. He has probably some connexion with this English lad ; but *he's* bound hand and foot ; and will never see daylight again, except it's on his way to the galleys or the scaffold. Besides, *mon cher*, when a thing must be done, there's

no use in anticipating the consequences, or calculating the difficulties. As I said before, I am sorry; but I have a choice of two evils, and I have not the slightest hesitation as to which I shall select. I prefer my own life to his, twenty to one; and I see no means of securing the one without taking the other—therefore he must die, and the sooner the better. You will then look to your own safety by instant departure; and I will not fail to meet you at the appointed spot, as soon as I have had time to receive my share of the inheritance, and convert it into money. We will afterwards set out, and range the world together, turning our backs on this cursed city for ever.’

“‘I am of opinion, now,’ said the same speaker, when they had reached a spot where the road divided within two miles of the city, that we should separate, and enter the town by different avenues. We shall excite less observation. It will also be better for me to avoid any communication with your house, or even with you. In short I—I don’t see any thing that need keep you here above an hour—nothing so weak as delay or deliberation in these affairs—few men would face a battery if they paused to contemplate the act in all its bearings

—so of this, or any other feat that demands resolution—let it be done, and away. Just send me a line to the Lion d’or, where I shall put up, to say that all is right. Not in those terms, though—they’re suspicious if seen or intercepted—say, ‘Sir, the papers you required are safe, and shall be produced whenever you desire it,’ and sign it merely by initials—not your own though; any others you please. That can lead to nothing. Thus if the boy is inquired for, you’ll be away, and no connexion can be traced between us. As for your mother—’

“‘My mother, Sir,’ said his companion, ‘as you well know, will never say a word to betray either you or me. I own I—I have feelings about my mother. She has spoiled me—perhaps ruined me—at least helped to do it—but I—I couldn’t bite off her ear at the scaffold for all that—’ and the voice of the speaker faltered.

“‘You’re growing sentimental, *mon cher*,’ said the superior—‘touching on the confines of the pathetic. Bah! *Laissons cela aux autres*—Do you repent? Do you wish to retract?’ continued he, after a pause, finding his companion made no answer to his last exhortation

—‘because, if you do, now’s your time to say so. Two alternatives will then remain for me—I must go on, and change places with the young Englishman; or I must turn my horse’s head and get beyond the borders of France as soon as I can—I shall then be condemned in my absence, my flight will confirm the evidence of the two lads, I shall be outlawed—lose my inheritance, and be doomed to poverty for the rest of my life. As for you, you’ll wear a *blouse*, and live on onions and black bread for the remainder of your’s. Choisissez.’

“‘I have chosen,’ said his companion, doggedly, ‘and have no intention of retracting.’

“‘Bien,’ replied the other; ‘then we will say no more about it. And now,’ continued he, drawing his rein, ‘here we will part. You to your business; I to mine. Let the future be our motto—En avant! the word; and remember, mon cher, that the beginning, middle, and end of our drama, must be action—action—action! Adieu! Au revoir! We meet again at Philippi!’

“‘Adieu!’ cried the second as he turned his horse’s head away, slowly pursuing the right-hand road—‘Adieu!—Mais, pour l’avenir,’ and he drew in a long breath—‘qui nous le dira!’

“ ‘It’s natural—perfectly natural!’ murmured the first, turning round on his saddle to look after him—‘he has neither so much to lose nor to gain as I have. Ce pauvre Rodolphe! Aussi, il a une mère, lui—moi, je n’ai rien.’

“We will here leave the travellers to pursue their separate ways, and return to the police office, where Simon, fatigued with his peregrinations, arrived about one o’clock in the morning, having spent the intermediate hours in an unsuccessful endeavour to discover whether Julie had been conveyed out of the city. His conclusion, however, was, that she had not; the livery she wore being sufficiently remarkable to have excited attention. But with respect to Monsieur Rodolphe, there was no saying—his appearance being much less distinctive.

“ ‘There is no intelligence,’ asked he, ‘of any importance?’

“ ‘Only that Blase was here just now, to say that a man in a blue cloak and slouched hat was seen to enter the cabaret Grimaud about midnight. He let himself in with a key.’

“ ‘Was the Lieutenant informed of it?’ said Simon.

“The Lieutenant was gone—but Blase says

he can't escape them; there are three watching the house; and they will not lose sight of him if he comes out, but will send some one to let us know.'

" 'Bien,' said Simon, 'the bird's limed then; which being the case, I'll take an hour's rest, and a snatch of something to eat, for I'm devilish tired. He has been conveying the girl away somewhere or other,' thought he; 'drowning her in the river, I shouldn't wonder; and now he's returned, thinking all's safe, *le malheureux*. They're always so—they never see an inch before their noses, but walk right into the noose. *C'est leur destinée qui les mène.*'

" It formed part of Rodolphe's plan not to arrive at home till there was a tolerable certainty of his mother not only being in bed, but asleep. It is true, she had lent herself to his plans up to a certain point; but he was certain that her compliance would stop short of any violence being offered to Julie. In short he could not have proposed such a thing to her. He had won her consent to what she considered only a temporary confinement and inconvenience imposed on the young page, by representing that it was indispensable to the safety of one they

both loved—he more than she, certainly ; but still there was ‘one part of her heart’ that would have been sorry still for her son’s friend and namesake, for he was her foster child—Rodolphe’s *frère de lait* ; and that is a bond of attachment, that amongst the lower orders of Frenchwomen, as with the Irish, is rarely broken. He had caused her much wo, for he it was who had enticed Rodolphe from the sphere and occupations to which by birth he was destined, made him discontented with his home and his fortunes, led him into vice and ill company, and given him habits and desires that could not in his station, be honestly satisfied ; yet she could not learn that his life was in danger, without feeling that she loved him still. His mother had died in her arms within the hour that gave him birth, and up to the age of seven years the children had equally shared in her care and affection. At that period Rodolphe Bruneau was sent to a distance to be educated, whilst the parents of the little Grimaud proposed to give their son such instruction as accorded with his situation and prospects ; but from the moment of the departure of his play-fellow and companion the child pined visibly—he had always been of an unusually grave

and taciturn disposition for his age—but now he renounced all diversion, fled from all fellowship, neglected his whip, and his ball, and his hoop, and passed his hours seated on a little stool, in one invariable corner of the room, silent, still and sad.

“ ‘ This will never do,’ said Robert Grimaud to his wife, one day, when he had been quietly smoking his pipe in the chimney corner, and contemplating the melancholy child—‘ the boy will sink into an atrophy—cela lui a frappé au cœur. We are not so ill to do but we may afford to give our Rodolphe an education too, as we have no other child ; and perhaps make a priest of him, or let him study the law—why not ?’

“ Madame Grimaud saw no reason why not—the cabaret was then a flourishing concern ; her vanity was flattered at the idea of making her Rodolphe a gentleman, and the child was accordingly sent to join his companion. But although Rodolphe Bruneau was educated and maintained with considerable liberality at a distance, he was never suffered to return to Nantes. The late Monsieur Bruneau had had two sisters, on whose male heirs his property devolved, if he himself died without children.

Rodolphe was the son of the sister he most loved ; but she had made a marriage degrading in itself, and odious in the eyes of her brother, who extended the hatred he felt for the father, to this sole offspring of the inauspicious union. When his age made it necessary for him to choose a profession, the youth selected that of an avocat, whilst his humble and still constant companion fixed on a lower walk in the same line—but the selection was only in word, not in deed. Rodolphe Bruneau was idle, dissipated, and vicious ; Rodolphe Grimaud had a morbid craving for excitement, was irresistibly fascinated by gaming of every sort, and never happy when he was away from his friend. Thus they journeyed on the road to ruin together. Grimaud sometimes came back to see his parents ; and got what money he could of them ; and Bruneau, whenever he was in funds, shared them liberally with his companion.

“ At length an awkward transaction in which they were both involved, but the chief discredit of which fell on Grimaud, caused a temporary separation, and an apparent, but *only* apparent alienation. Grimaud returned to his mother, who had by this time been some years a widow, and was reduced to poverty by his extravagance.

He got a situation as marker at a billiard table, the only thing he was fit for, and lodged at his mother's; soothing himself with the prospect of rejoining his friend when circumstances should be more propitious.

"In the mean time affairs went ill with Rodolphe Bruneau. His uncle turned a deaf ear to his applications for money, and he was without resources. His exigence was so great that he even ventured to break through the condition upon which maintenance had hitherto been afforded him. He came to Nantes and presented himself to the old man; but so far from the enterprise proving successful, the sight of him seemed only to augment the dislike that had been coeval with his birth. He returned with rage in his heart; matters became worse, and he desperate. He was aware that at his uncle's death the one half of his property must devolve to himself. He arrived suddenly one night at the cabaret Grimaud, announcing he was come on business of a very private nature; and having left his portmanteau, and borrowed a dark lantern, he went out, saying he should return shortly. Some time afterwards he did return, apparently much agitated; and declaring he had got into a quarrel, and must leave

Nantes immediately, lest his uncle should hear he had been there. He started within ten minutes, on foot, leaving his portmanteau behind him. More than that, the Grimauds knew not; but when the story of the assassination reached them, they naturally believed that Rodolphe Bruneau was involved in the guilt, and that Valentine was his agent.

“But it happened, by a singular coincidence, that on the evening Julie called at home to comfort and encourage Madeleine, and for other purposes of her own, that Rodolphe was standing at the window of a maison de jeu, exactly opposite, led thither by a certain curiosity to contemplate the house where the young Englishman who had become so singularly mixed up with the fortunes of his friend, had resided. The glaring colours of the livery, caught his eye. He saw her enter—watched her out, and followed her. Learned what she had said to the gaoler, who saw no motive for concealing it, pursued her to Monsieur Bruneau’s, and easily extracted the same information from the maid. It needed no more to convince him that his friend was in danger; and upon this he acted; placing the page in a distance from which he judged he could not escape; and departing himself

in pursuit of Rodolphe Bruneau, whom, however, he met on the road making his way towards the city, summoned thither by a letter, which informed him of the old man's having been assassinated by an Englishman; and that his presence was necessary to the arrangement of the affairs. On hearing Grimaud's story, he comprehended at once the mistake he had made, and the importance of silencing the page; and was, moreover, extremely anxious to secure, if possible, his share of the inheritance before the trial came on. There was therefore no time to lose; and instead of turning back on learning his danger, he only hastened forward with the greater speed.

"In pursuance of his plan to avoid an interview with his mother, Rodolphe Grimaud contrived not to reach his own door till after midnight. He was certain she would long ere that have retired to her bed, and in all probability be asleep; and, as she was somewhat deaf, and he had the means of entering the house without her assistance, it was not very likely that his stealthy pace would disturb her slumbers; and it having been agreed between them that no nightly lodger should be harboured during his absence, he had no other interruption to fear.

"The streets were nearly deserted by the

time he turned into that narrow one wherein his mother dwelt. One or two persons, apparently hastening to their nightly rest, crossed him as he passed down. Softly, softly, he inserted the key and turned it in the lock—at that moment a man in the dress of a labourer came hastily by—‘Can you tell me,’ said he ‘if it be past midnight?’

“‘Midnight has struck,’ answered Rodolphe.

“‘Bon soir,’ said the man as he moved on his way, and Rodolphe entered and gently closed the door. He turned into the room where Julie had first seen him, and which served the purpose both of kitchen and parlour. It was empty as he expected, and all within the house seemed silent. He took up a piece of wood that lay upon the hearth and raked back the ashes with which the old woman had covered the smouldering logs to keep in the fire till morning; then he took a rushlight out of a drawer—lighted it, and sat down in his mother’s chair. He felt that the deed once done, he must fly, and that all the pause he had was before. He knew that he should never see his mother again, and after some reflection he resolved to write to her, and leave the letter where she would find it in the morning. So he wrote,

not saying why he had returned, nor alluding to Julie; but giving her his last farewell, and bidding her not curse him. Then he arose, made a strong effort to call up the man within him, and cast off the softness that the thought of his mother had gathered round his heart—walked firmly to a drawer where knives were kept, examined them deliberately and artistically—rejected them all, saying, ‘No, a razor is more sure,’ and taking off his shoes, proceeded up stairs to his own bed-room to fetch one. He placed his ear to his mother’s door, but no sound reached him, ‘she sleeps sound,’ he murmured, ‘that’s well;’ and he descended the stairs again. Before he put on his shoes he passed the razor over the sole of one of them to clean the edge—then he took off his coat tucked up his shirt sleeves above the elbow, and with the candle in one hand and the razor in the other, he left the room, proceeded along a narrow passage which led to the back of the house, put the razor into his mouth and the candle on the floor, whilst he raised a trap door which formed the entrance to the once well filled cellar where they still kept the small quantity of liquorstheir humble trade demanded. There was a bolt to the trap which should have

been drawn—it was not ; but Rodolphe's mind was too much absorbed to observe the neglected caution. The pannel being raised, a ladder appeared, by which the descent was to be made ; but being almost perpendicular, it was necessary to turn round and go down backwards. Rodolphe did so, cautiously and softly, for he would have been glad that his victim were asleep—step by step he descended—the razor still in his mouth and the candle in his hand—he reached the last round of the ladder—the next step was deeper—he stretched out his foot to place it firmly on the ground—he trod on something—it was not the earth—it gave way beneath his weight—he stooped the rushlight and looked down—and saw he was standing on his dead mother's breast. Horror seized him—he dropped the razor and the light—rushed up the ladder, and fled amain.

## CHAPTER XXII.

THE STORY OF JULIA'S PARENTS CONCLUDED.

"CROUCHING in the corner of the cellar, in darkness and in terror, sat Julie, the intended victim. In truth, she had suffered enough within the last few days to have turned many a stronger brain.

"She had gone to bed on the night we last left her, beset with fear from the strangeness of Rodolphe's manner, and yet willing to persuade herself she had no cause, from her confidence in the old woman. Long and earnestly she heard the son and mother talking below—the voices for the most part reached her but faintly; but now and then a sudden burst in a louder key betokened the energy of the debate. But the door of the kitchen being closed, no word passed through

the rafters, with sufficient distinctness to throw any light on the subject of the colloquy.

“‘It cannot be about me,’ at length she said. ‘They have enough to talk of, there’s no doubt of that—and if they had any suspicion, they would surely never let me stay here to be a spy on them ;’ and comforting herself with this conviction she went to bed, but, as she had done the night before, without undressing. ‘As I know all I want *now*,’ thought she, as she laid her head on the pillow, ‘to-morrow I’ll go to the police office—tell every thing I have discovered, and leave the rest to them.’

“At first she thought she should not sleep ; but gradually her eye-lids became heavy, her thoughts wandered, and she dozed. A slight sound at her chamber door aroused her. She lifted up her head, and saw through the wide chinks and seams of the old shrunk wood, that there was some one on the other side with a candle, who with the blade of a knife thrust in, was endeavouring to withdraw the wooden bolt. The feat was soon accomplished, the door opened, and Rodolphe entered the room. Julie started from the bed, trying to make for the door ; but he seized her arm with a powerful gripe, and holding the knife he still held in his

hand to her throat, he said in a low but firm voice, 'Obey me, and you shall suffer no harm—but if you resist, or seek to raise an alarm, you die.' He next tied a handkerchief over her eyes, and led her down the stairs; at the bottom, the voice of the old woman said to her 'N'ayez pas peur,'—then conducting her along the passage, going himself first,—he guided her steps to the bottom of the ladder. There he took off the handkerchief, and repeated his injunctions and threats; whilst his mother went up stairs to fetch the mattress and blankets, which she handed down to him. This done, after making her bed on the ground, they both retired, enforcing again that her life depended on her silence, and closing the trap door, left her in darkness and alone. After that the old woman regularly brought her her food; and seemed willing to relieve her discomforts as much as she could; but though she saw no more of Rodolphe she never doubted his being in the house—indeed his mother, at every visit, assured her he was close at hand.

"A few hours before Rodolphe's arrival, when Simon left the cabaret, Madame Grimaud, having prepared Julie's supper, proceeded to descend with it as usual to the cellar. The pan-

nel was heavy, and being old and rather feeble, she had always some difficulty in lifting it, but on this occasion, whether from want of caution or want of strength, she let go her hold a moment too soon, and falling forwards into the cellar pitched upon her head and broke her neck; whilst the trap, dropping back, closed over the scene, before Julie had time to discern who it was that had made this sudden irruption into her prison. At first she momentarily expected the person, whoever it might be, to speak or stir, but as minute after minute passed and all remained motionless and silent, fear and surprise grew into horror—she was no longer alone, she knew she had a companion, though to her invisible; who was it? what was it? was the visitor alive or dead? ‘Perhaps,’ thought she, ‘it’s a corpse; some murdered, bleeding wretch they have flung down here!’ and she crawled further and further away, and squeezed herself closer and closer to the cold damp wall, her living, creeping flesh scarce less damp and cold than it. From this horrid trance she was, at length, aroused, by the lifting of the trap door a second time, and seeing Rodolphe slowly descending the ladder with the razor between his teeth. That he came to murder her

she felt assured ; but in an instant, before she had time to discern the cause of his precipitate retreat, the light was suddenly extinguished and he was gone. When the house was entered shortly afterwards by the police officers, the trap was found open ; the old woman lying cold and stiff at the foot of the ladder, with the candle and razor beside her ; and Julie sitting of a heap, with her face buried in her lap, utterly speechless.

“ In the mean time Rodolphe Bruneau arrived at the Lion d’or, which was a small and obscure inn in the suburbs, and not far from the residence of his late uncle, attributes which accorded especially with the views of one who desired to avoid observation, and have as little communication with the town as possible.

“ Having supped and slept, he presented himself on the following morning to his co-heir and the legal gentleman engaged in the settlement of the affairs, to whom he had been hitherto a stranger, and by whom he found himself very coolly received. He returned coolness for coolness—declined any discussion of the late catastrophe, saying, that as from his earliest childhood he had been condemned to be an alien from his uncle and his house, he

could not be expected to feel a very vivid interest in the event; and that as he was wholly unacquainted with his affairs and connexions, it was impossible he could form any idea with respect to the motives of the assassin. He also represented, that being called to a distant part of the country, by business of an urgent nature, which might occupy him an indefinite time, he wished his claims on the estate to be settled and discharged as soon as possible. The *procureur* answered, that the affairs being perfectly understood and arranged, he had only to affix his signature to certain documents, and appoint some one on the spot, to receive, and give a discharge, for the money, and he might depart immediately; but Rodolphe, having powerful reasons for hastening the payment, could not agree to this; but obtained a promise that by the third day, he should be released with the money in his pocket; the *procureur* himself consenting to advance it; *moyennant*, a certain sum which he was to be permitted to retain to repay himself the interest. Thus, as the *cours d'assize* did not meet till the following month, Rodolphe considered the matter satisfactorily arranged, and he waited as patiently as he could the moment that was to set him free.

"One thing, however, disturbed him; he did not receive the promised intimation from Rodolphe Grimaud. Had the heart of his ally failed him, and had he permitted the page to live? The silence was perplexing; and when the eve of his departure arrived, the *procureur* having appointed an early hour on the following morning for the payment of the money, he could no longer restrain his anxiety, but resolved to go to the rue St. Jacques, and endeavour to find out what was doing at the cabaret.

"Accordingly, when the evening closed in, he wrapt his cloak about him, and set forth. The cabaret, when he reached it, looked much as usual—the outer door was open, and a light in the kitchen shone through the chinks of the shutters; so he stept in. Two men were sitting by the fire smoking, who instantly arose and laid their hands upon his shoulders.

"‘C’est lui!’ exclaimed one of them; ‘did I not say he’d come back? Trust me; I know their ways; they never can keep out of it—c’est leur destinée qui les entraine.—Allons, Monsieur Rodolphe,’ continued he—‘for I think you won’t deny that you are Monsieur Rodolphe?’

"‘I cannot deny that my name is Rodolphe,

certainly,' replied the young man, whose conscience gave him every appearance of guilt—'but by what authority, or for what reason, you treat me thus rudely, I am at a loss to comprehend.'

" 'Doubtless,' returned Simon, for it was he who had spoken—'persons in your situation generally labour under a like difficulty of apprehension. However it is not my business to enlighten you—that is the affair of my superiors. En attendant, you will have the goodness to accompany these gentlemen and me—' and so saying, assisted by two other of their fraternity who were in the street watching the door, without further explanation, they led him away to prison.

"On the following day he was brought up for examination before the Juge de paix; who with Bontems beside him, and a copy of Valentine's deposition on the table, was prepared to find in the prisoner the confederate of the young Englishman. As for the prisoner himself, confusion and terror were depicted in his countenance; he concluded that Grimaud had somehow or other, allowed the young page to escape, whose information, however obtained, would be sufficient to convict him, and that he was a lost man.

"But the very commencement of the interrogatory overthrew the conjectures of both parties.

" 'Your name,' said the Juge de paix, 'is Rodolphe Grimaud?' and Bontems had written, 'name, Rodolphe Grimaud,' before the magistrate had completed the question.

" 'No, it is not;' replied the prisoner.

"The justice and clerk looked at each other, and raised their eyebrows; whilst Simon, who was standing behind, smiled contemptuously.

" 'What name do you profess to answer to, then?' said the Justice.

" 'To my own name, Rodolphe Bruneau,' returned the prisoner.

" 'C'est égal,' replied the Magistrate. 'I fancy you are not the less the person we are in search of, whether you choose to call yourself by one name or the other.'

"Rodolphe very much feared that in that respect the Justice's notions were correct.

" 'You are, at all events, the son of the woman calling herself Grimaud, who lately kept a certain cabaret in the rue St. Jacques?'

" 'No, I am not,' replied the prisoner.

" 'But you have passed for her son, and lived with her under that character?'

“ ‘Never,’ returned the prisoner.

“ ‘Do you mean to deny that you have been dwelling under her roof, calling her mother, whilst she addressed you as her son?’

“ ‘I do deny it,’ replied the prisoner. ‘I cannot deny that I have been in the house of the woman you speak of—but I never either ate or slept under her roof since I was seven years old. As a child, I may have called her mother, because she was my nurse, and the only mother I knew—but I have never done so since. In short, it is evident that you mistake my identity; you take me for another person. I am altogether ignorant of the motive of this inquiry, or of what crime I am suspected; but that I am not the person you take me for, I can easily prove.’

“ ‘When we seized you in the cabaret, you made no attempt to convince us of our mistake,’ said Simon, who felt considerable vexation at the turn affairs were taking. He was a man who prided himself extremely on his dexterity and astuteness in matters of this nature, and he had been greatly annoyed at the escape of Rodolphe Grimaud, who under the influence of the horror which had seized him when he left the cellar where his mother lay, had rushed out

of the house and through the street with such rapidity, that he was away and out of sight before the persons who had been set to watch the door, and who were not prepared for such an explosion, had had time to lay hands on him.

“‘I did not deny that my name was Rodolphe,’ replied the prisoner; ‘which was all you asked me—why should I?’

“‘What took you to the cabaret at all?’ inquired the Justice.

“‘I have been here for a few days on business,’ replied the prisoner; ‘in short, I am one of the coheirs of the late Monsieur Bruneau; and I wished before I departed, which had I not been detained I should have done ere this, to pay a visit to Madame Grimaud, who as I have explained was my nurse, and whom I had only seen once since I was seven years old. In short I never was in Nantes since that period, except about two years ago, and then it was only for a few hours, till within the last three days, when I was summoned hither by letters, which informed me of the death of my uncle, and that my presence was required. If you will take the trouble of sending for Monsieur Ernest Bruneau, and a certain procureur, called La

Roche, you will be satisfied that I speak the truth.'

"Accordingly a messenger was despatched for these two gentlemen, who shortly appeared; and on being asked if they knew the prisoner, answered without hesitation, that he was Monsieur Rodolphe Bruneau, and corroborated the account he had rendered of himself.

"The Juge de paix rose from his *fauteuil* and apologised; Bontems wiped his pen on his coat sleeve, and replaced his papers in his portfolio; whilst Simon, crest-fallen and disappointed, left the room.

"'But may I be permitted to inquire,' said the Procureur, 'the meaning of all this?—On what grounds has this gentleman been arrested, and why have we been called upon to speak to his identity?'

"'Messieurs,' replied the Juge de paix, with an ingratiating suavity of manner, 'I owe this gentleman, Monsieur Rodolphe Bruneau, as he has satisfactorily proved himself to be, an explanation. Do me the pleasure to be seated for a few minutes; and I will have the honour of relating the circumstances that have occasioned the mistake he has so much right to complain of.'

“ Thereupon he narrated all he knew of Julie Le Moine, her motives, and her adventures; with the reasons they had for imagining that she was in possession of some material evidence with respect to the assassination of Monsieur Bruneau, and that Rodolphe Grimaud was implicated in the crime. ‘ Mais, Messieurs,’ added he, ‘ the poor girl is incapable of giving her testimony; and it is even doubtful whether she will ever be in a condition to do so. She was found in the cellar speechless, and has remained so ever since; in short, her life is despaired of, and it is too probable that the secret will descend with her to the grave.’

“ To the whole of this story the Procureur listened with an attentive ear, moved by curiosity at first, but as the narrative proceeded, enchained by a stronger interest; whilst ever and anon, as the circumstances were unfolded, he darted from his small grey eyes, over which the wrinkled forehead, and bent brows portentous hung, glances that shot through the soul of Rodolphe Bruneau.

“ When the voice of the Magistrate ceased, Monsieur la Roche took out his snuff box, and deliberately patting the lid, and furnishing

his finger and thumb with an ample provision, which he slowly transferred to his nostrils, he said, 'Il faut avouer que la chose est embarrassante, et qu'on n'y voit pas clair. In short, there is a mystery. What interest, par exemple, could this Rodolphe Grimaud have in the death of my late friend and patron? Possibly you, Sir,' and here he faced round upon Bruneau, 'who have always been so intimately connected with him, could throw some light on the affair.'

" 'Really,' answered Rodolphe with a voice and countenance that betrayed an agitation he could not control, 'it would be impossible for me to conjecture—human motives are often inexplicable. But I must say, that it does not appear to me by any means evident, that Grimaud has had any thing to do with the affair, at all. It was not him, but the Englishman that was discovered escaping from the house, and that my uncle recognised as his assassin.' "

" 'C'est vrai,' said the Procureur; 'and it is certainly possible that the suspicions which have led this young lady to the cabaret Grimaud *may* have been misplaced. But, if there was nothing to conceal, if her testimony was

not apprehended, why was she confined in the cellar? That Grimaud must have had some interest or other in keeping back her evidence is clear, and a powerful one too; since the razor that was found at the foot of the ladder furnishes a strong presumption that security for himself and his confederates, was to be purchased with her life. Did you ever see this Grimaud?" added he, turning to Ernest, "What sort of person is he?"

"I never saw him," replied Ernest.

"Here's the deposition of the young Englishman," said Bontems, taking a paper from the portfolio, "in which he describes, as far as he was able to distinguish it, the appearance of the man, whom he affirms, conducted him to the villa, and shut him up there; and we are left to presume, if there is any truth in his story, which, till these late circumstances came out, nobody supposed there was, that that man was Grimaud."

"At that moment the door of the room was gently opened by Simon, who putting in his head, made a signal to Bontems, that he desired to speak to him. Bontems arose, and handing the paper to the Procureur, left the room; whilst the latter slowly drew his spectacles from

his pocket, slowly released them from their shagreen case, which he as slowly returned to the same pocket, before he with the like deliberate measure fixed the glasses on his nose ; which process being at length accomplished, he commenced reading aloud that particular part of Valentine's deposition, pausing every now and then, and casting his eyes up at Rodolphe, as if comparing his person with the description set down.

“The truth was, La Roche was at a loss how to proceed without committing himself, if his conjectures should happen to be erroneous ; and his object was to gain time for reflection, and if possible to turn the Magistrate's suspicions in the same direction as his own. But this was not so easy. The Juge de paix was altogether unacquainted with the circumstances on which the Procureur's distrust was founded—namely, Rodolphe's previous character and conduct, and his intimacy with Grimaud, which were perfectly well known to La Roche, who had been for many years the legal adviser of Monsieur Bruneau ; and in addition to these presumptions against him, there was his extraordinary haste to secure his inheritance and depart, even at the sacrifice of a pretty considerable sum, the circumstance of

several urgent applications for money having been found among the murdered man's papers, some of a date immediately previous to the catastrophe ; and, finally, the palpable terror and confusion he evinced on the present occasion. ' If he be really guilty,' said the Procureur to himself, ' once out of this room, he'll be off and away out of the kingdom—but on what pretext to detain him ?'

" As for Rodolphe, his desire to go was evident ; but that very desire tied him to his chair, so much he feared to betray it.

" At this juncture the door opened again, and Bontems entered, followed by Simon, André the page, and a stranger. The first holding in his hand a torn letter and a key, and the second a small portmanteau. Hereupon, Rodolphe Bruneau arose, took up his hat, made a bow to the Justice, who courteously returned his salutation, and moved towards the door.

" ' Excusez,' said Bontems, gently placing his hand against his breast, to arrest his egress, ' excusez ; il y a ici de vos affaires, ayez la bonté de vous rasseoir ;' and he again drew forward the chair Rodolphe had previously occupied, who saw no alternative but to take it.

“ ‘What have we here?’ said the Justice. ‘What portmanteau is that?’

‘It has been found in the house,’ replied Simon, ‘where the young lady was confined, and is marked by the initials R. B., by which we judged that it might possibly belong to this gentleman.’

“At the announcement of this supposition every eye took the same direction, and turned towards Rodolphe Bruneau; whilst the Procureur said, with animation, ‘allons, the interest of the drama is increasing;’ the Justice, too, who began to perceive that there was something more in the matter than he had suspected, polished his glasses before he put them on, in order that he might have a clearer view of the scene that was acting around him.

“ ‘Here is a key, too, which fits the lock,’ said Bontems.

“ ‘Has the portmanteau been examined?’ inquired the Justice.

“ ‘It has been looked into at the police office,’ returned Simon, ‘in the presence of the Lieutenant; but the contents are left exactly as they were found.’

“ ‘Let us see them,’ said the Justice. Upon which, the portmanteau being opened, they

discovered rolled up, and lying on the top, a shirt which had evidently been worn, and which, on being unfolded, exhibited stains of blood upon the wrist. There were also a few other articles of dress, and necessaries for the toilet, one of which was wrapped in a letter, which on examination proved to be in the writing of the late Monsieur Bruneau, and was addressed to Rodolphe, at Le Mans. It was evidently an answer to an application for money; and conveyed, with many reproaches, a positive refusal. The post mark was on it, and it appeared to have been duly sent and received. But when Simon shook out the shirt, another piece of paper appeared, which had been wrapt in it. It was the half of a letter also in the hand of Monsieur Bruneau, and clearly addressed to the same person as the other—and there was enough of it legible to decipher, that it contained a proposal, on certain conditions, of making an addition to his annuity of four thousand francs. There was no post mark on the paper, nor did it appear that it had ever been forwarded.

“‘That letter,’ said the Procureur, ‘must have been written on the very evening previous to the assassination, and taken out of the

house by the assassin, whoever he was ; for it was on that very afternoon, that Monsieur Bru-neau spoke to me on the subject, and proposed this means of shaking off an annoyance that kept him in a constant state of irritation.'

" 'Do you admit that the portmanteau is yours?' said the Justice to Rodolphe.

" 'I admit that it *was*,' replied he, 'but I presented it some time since to Grimaud.'

" 'With its contents, I presume?' said the Procureur, ironically.

" 'With respect to the key,' said Bontems, 'it was found by this lad, André, in the pocket of the dress when it was returned to him this morning.'

" 'And I intended taking it to the woman who borrowed the dress of me,' said André, 'but before I had time to do so, the tailor that I had sent my clothes to, that he might repair the lining that was unripped, brought me this letter.'

" 'Which I found concealed betwixt the lining and the cloth,' said the tailor.

" 'So I thought it better to take them both to the Lieutenant of police,' added André.

" 'Gentlemen,' said Rodolphe, 'the plot is cunningly laid, certainly; and the object of it is

evidently to transfer the crime, and its penalty, from the shoulders of the young Englishman to another's. But allow me to ask, how should this girl, Julie Le Moine, who has been playing so extraordinary a part in this drama, have become honestly possessed of the key of a portmanteau, which, whether it be mine, as you seem to suspect, or Grimaud's, as I assert, assuredly was not hers?"

"That I can answer for," said Simon. "The key is not that of your portmanteau, but of a similar one belonging to the young lady's father; and she procured it from her own servant the night she called at home."

"Still," rejoined Rodolphe, "it must have been for the purpose of opening what did not belong to her—and in all probability her object was, by placing the letter taken by the assassin in the box, to fix the crime on Grimaud."

"At this suggestion the Procureur, Simon, and Bontems, all shook their heads incredulously; whilst the Justice desired to hear the contents of the letter the tailor had found; which proved to be the other half of that which had dropt from the shirt, and contained the offer of the augmented annuity, on the condition that Rodolphe quitted the kingdom, and

never returned to it during Monsieur Bruneau's lifetime, nor troubled him with further applications.

" 'It is my opinion,' said the Procureur in a low key to the Justice, 'that the young lady has opened the portmanteau, and there found the torn paper—or she may have divided it herself with some view of her own.'

" 'It is not exactly easy to perceive how she obtained her information; but the direction in which her suspicions turned is plain enough.'

" 'And correct enough, I fancy,' said Bon-tems. 'The others may have been agents and confederates, but I suspect this is the principal.'

" 'I confess,' said the Procureur, 'I find myself rather inclining to believe in the young Englishman's story, only that it is impossible to discover what motive could have induced the assassin to take him there.'

" 'Perhaps to fix the crime on him,' said the Justice.

" 'C'est possible,' replied the Procureur, 'but I doubt its being simply that. There was more danger likely to accrue from the proceeding than advantage to be gained by it. Mais en attendant, what is to be done next?'

" 'After some further consultation, in which

the Procureur did not hesitate to give it as his decided opinion that Rodolphe was implicated in the crime, it was judged prudent to commit him to prison, till it was seen whether Julie recovered so far as to be able to give her evidence, or till the affair could be otherwise further inquired into.

“From this moment La Roche, who had been the intimate friend of the late Monsieur Bruneau, devoted himself with energy to the investigation of the truth. He offered a reward for the discovery of Grimaud, who, however, never appeared; and he obtained that a pardon should be promised to any one, who not being a principal in the crime, would come forward and give evidence on the subject. But nothing was gained by this measure either.

“He also procured permission to visit Valentine in the prison; and after hearing the young man’s story from his own lips, came away strongly impressed with the truth of it; and satisfied that the stranger who had conducted him to the villa, and left him there, was either Bruneau or Grimaud; but as Valentine was unacquainted with the features of the men, the personal description and dress answered as well for one as the other.

"In the mean time, the Cours d'assize had met, and its business was drawing to a conclusion, whilst there appeared little prospect of Julie's being in a condition to communicate the information she had suffered so much to obtain.

"Much therefore to La Roche's annoyance, it seemed likely that the trial of the prisoners would be postponed; and although he was himself fully persuaded of Rodolphe's guilt, he was beginning to despair of procuring such proofs as should vindicate Valentine and set him free, when an advertisement caught his eye, from the host of an obscure inn in the suburbs, distinguished by the name of *Le Poisson rouge*.

"The advertisement was to the effect, that if the gentleman who left his horse on a certain night in the stables of *The Poisson rouge* did not return to claim him, he would be sold to reimburse the host for the expenses of his keep. The date struck La Roche—it was the very night of Monsieur Bruneau's assassination.

"Now the Procureur had taken considerable pains to find out if there were any traces of Rodolphe Bruneau's having visited Nantes on that night, but without success. He had written to a friend at Le Mans, and had, through his inquiries, ascertained that he was not there

at that particular period; but although he had inquired at the Bureaux des diligences, and interrogated the different conducteurs, he had found no indications of him on the road.

“ ‘Allons!’ said he after reading the advertisement, as he took up his hat and walked out of the café—‘*Au Poisson Rouge!*’

“ ‘Monsieur,’ said he to the host, ‘I have seen an advertisement of yours, about a horse that was left here. Perhaps, you’ll permit me to see him, for I have a notion I am acquainted with the owner.’

“ ‘Willingly,’ said the landlord; who straight-ways conducted him to the stable.

“ ‘Did you receive the horse of the gentleman yourself?’ inquired La Roche.

“ ‘I did not,’ replied the host; ‘it was the lad in the stable who took him. Gilles,’ cried he to the ostler, ‘show this gentleman the brown gelding.’

“ ‘Having ascertained that the traveller had arrived on that particular night and gone away again after committing the horse to the charge of the ostler, without entering the house, the Procureur inquired if they had also the saddle.

“ ‘Assurément,’ said Gilles; ‘we have not

only the saddle but the whip. I believe he left that by mistake; for he ordered me to unstrap the portmanteau which was fastened on the saddle, and took it with him.'

"The heart of the Procureur bounded at the word portmanteau.

"Should you be able to recognise the owner of the horse if you saw him?" inquired he.

"Undoubtedly," replied Gilles; 'the rather that I happened to see him again on the same night.'

"Indeed!" said the Procureur. 'Have the goodness to explain how that happened.'

"Why," returned Gilles, 'on that night my poor mother was very ill—she is since dead, God rest her soul! She died of spasms in the stomach—well, they had sent to say she wished to see me, and I was just going, when the stranger arrived. I was obliged to stay to put up his horse, and I rubbed him down and fed him as carefully,' added Gilles glancing at his master, 'as if my mother had been already in her coffin.—However, that done, I hastened to her bed-side, to give her what comfort I could; but she got worse, and I went out to a certain shop where they sell

drugs, in the rue de Mousseline, to ask for a cordial. It was late, but they opened the door when I rang, and gave me what I wanted. Whilst the man was mixing it, the gentleman who had left the horse, entered precipitately, and inquired if there was a surgeon to be found in the neighbourhood; and they directed him to Monsieur Le Moine's, hard by——'

"'Is there a surgeon of that name in the rue de Mousseline?' interrupted the Procureur.

"'There is,' answered Gilles; 'and the gentleman hurried away to fetch him. I suppose he came to Nantes to see some sick friend. I don't think he observed me, but I recognised him immediately.'

Here ended the mystery. Not only Gilles, but the man in the druggist's shop, swore to the person of Rodolphe Bruneau, who, when he found further subterfuge was vain, admitted his guilt. There was, however, one saving clause in the dark story which mitigated his sentence from death to the galleys. The crime was no sooner committed, than remorse seized him—he had hurried out of the room and the house, carrying with him the letter he had seen lying on a table by the bed-side addressed

to himself, and which by the light of the lantern he bore he contrived to read. Then it was he hastened in search of a surgeon, by whose assistance he thought his uncle's life might yet be saved; certain, that as the blow had been struck when the old man was asleep, he himself had not been recognised, and quite satisfied that the Grimauds, the only persons who were in the secret of his having visited Nantes, would never betray him. It had been his original plan, the murder once committed, to remount his horse and return with all speed to Le Mans; but the apprehension and dismay that instantly took possession of his mind, confounded his arrangements. He, therefore, after he had shut up the supposed surgeon in the wounded man's room, which, by the way, he locked lest Valentine should pursue and trace his own steps to the cabaret, hastened thither himself, ascended to the chamber above, where he changed the stained shirt for one he had provided himself with in case of such an emergency; and then, without disclosing the truth to the Grimauds, or bearing about himself any signs of guilt, instead of returning to *The Poisson Rouge* to fetch his horse, the doing which he feared might make it more

easy to trace him, he hastened out of the town on foot. Thus did the very precautions he used, lead to his detection; and thus may we say with Simon, 'c'est leur destinée qui les mène.'

## CHAPTER XXIII.

WHICH CONTAINS THE STORY OF JULIA.

"THUS you see," said Julie, when the story of her parents was concluded, "my earliest misfortune was, that I had a speechless mother—for the heroine of this strange adventure did not die. She recovered her health and her memory, though not her speech; and it may easily be imagined that her devotion and her sufferings left Valentine no alternative but to offer her his hand. But the object she had taken so much pains to attain, brought her little but sorrow and disappointment—the union was not a happy one. She felt that her husband had married her from gratitude, not from love; and she could never dismiss from her mind that he had preferred another. The consci-

ousness, too, of her own affection irritated her temper, and rendered her suspicious. She might have trusted that the recollection of its origin would be sufficient to endear her to a generous mind ; and perhaps she would have trusted, had she known herself to have been the object of Valentine's free and uninfluenced selection ; but she was not ; and that bitter drop in her cup empoisoned all the rest. Her husband did his best to reassure and make her happy ; but his efforts were vain ; and when experience convinced him that his endeavours were useless, he resigned the struggle. Kind, reasonable, and patient, he continued ; but he no longer tried to give her confidence in an affection that she was determined not to believe in.

Her father had consented to the match, though not without many pangs of disappointment ; but after all that had happened, and the publicity of the history, there was no alternative. He was still a poor man, for he had not long been established in business on his own account, and had had but little time to make money ; but what he could do for them he did. He took Valentine as a partner, with the view of qualifying him to become hereafter his

successor ; and he made arrangements for the young couple to live with him at a much cheaper rate than they could have done with a separate establishment. But all these advantages were counteracted, and finally rendered of no avail, by Julie's temper and jealous suspicions. Aurore, the fair and gentle Aurore, of whom she had truly predicted, '*elle pleurera mais elle n'agira pas,*' was still a dweller in the city of Nantes. She did weep the loss of her lover for some time ; but she had the consolation of feeling that she could not blame him ; and that he was guilty of no premeditated or voluntary infidelity to her. She herself could not have advised him to act otherwise than he did, and—Aurore was a woman—she knew that she still lived in his heart ; and that still, were he free, she would be his choice ; so the thing was bearable ; and after a reasonable measure of time and of tears, she gave her fair hand to another.

But this so far from improving the case, rather rendered it worse ; as, according to the *morale* of the city of Nantes, and indeed of the French nation in general, a married woman was a much more dangerous rival than a single one. Like other people, Aurore was to be seen

at the promenades, the gardens, the theatres, and the fêtes—and the sight of her was death to Julie, and the sound of her voice, was worse. If she went to these places she was wretched; and if she staid at home she was wretched too, unless Valentine was by her side; for she believed every hour he spent away from her was passed in the society of Aurore.

At length the disquiet of the unhappy couple reached such a climax, and became so annoying to Monsieur Le Moine, that he consented, and advised Valentine to consent, to what Julie had long been urging; namely, to return to England, and either establish himself as a French teacher, or set up a school; his acquaintance with the language, an accomplishment, at that time, far from general, giving him a fair prospect of success.

“This plan,” continued Julia, “was finally executed; and my father and mother quitted Nantes and removed to England, bringing me, then a child of four years old, along with them.”

Mais le chagrin monte en croupe, et galope avec nous; and matters did not go much better in England than they had done in France; for Julie brought her misfortunes with her. The temper and the passions which had always

been violent, indulgence and the absence of restraint had rendered uncontrollable ; and if during the first month of their marriage Julie could not believe that her husband loved her, still less could she believe it now, when she was conscious she had done so much to alienate his affections, and to efface the obligations he owed her.

The poor man made his first essay as a French teacher in his native town, where, as the neighbourhood was large, he might have done well enough, if his wife would have permitted him to stay there ; but she became jealous of a lady, who having been a companion of Valentine's in his childhood, and since prosperously married, was anxious to be kind to him, and do him what services she could ; and after committing many minor offences, she at length, in a fit of passion, struck her supposed rival in the street. Shame and vexation at the exposure she had incurred, rendered the place odious to her, and she never rested till she had won her husband's consent to leave it. But the next experiment succeeded no better. There were ladies every where ; and where there were not female friends, there were female pupils. Every ebullition of passion or folly

reacted on her own temper, and produced a fresh crop of suspicion and violence, till she rendered herself obnoxious to every body. People began by wondering, and ended by fearing and avoiding this tall, tremendous dark, dumb woman; and though they compassioned the fate of the unhappy husband, they could not venture to employ or associate with him, under the almost certain penalty of being annoyed and insulted by his wife. Thus was the unfortunate Valentine driven from place to place, growing poorer instead of richer, being obliged to expend for their daily support and frequent transmigrations, the little money his father-in-law had given him; till his energies were exhausted, his spirit broken; and hopeless, sad, dejected, he gradually relaxed in his exertions, and resigned himself patiently to the wretchedness and poverty he saw no means of avoiding.

The only pleasure that remained to him, in short the only object or occupation that seemed capable of rousing him from the lethargy of disappointment and despair that was overgrowing his faculties, was the education of his little girl. She had been from her birth extremely pretty, rather resembling

her father than her mother; and in spite of her hereditary claims to violence in the female line, she was gentle, mild and amiable, but timid to excess. In short her passions, whatever they might have been by nature, had been frightened out of her.

Julie Le Moine was born with the spirit of a heroine, the passions of a Medea, and the temper of a vixen; and the circumstances of her youth had rather tended to foster than subdue these dangerous endowments. But the training of her child was exactly the reverse of her own. Fear, privation, and suffering, were the earliest lessons of the little Julia. During her infancy, whilst her father was engaged and called from home by his business, she was left wholly to the charge of her mother, who loved her as love could only exist in that heart of fire, passionately; but, unhappily, the only sentiment she inspired in the bosom of her child was awe; an awe which time and circumstances augmented into terror.

Thus the poor girl advanced from childhood to womanhood, beautiful in person, not uncultivated in mind, but a stranger to enjoyment; without energy, without hope, and steeped in poverty to the very lips.

At length the small, very small earnings of the father proved inadequate to the support of the family; and it was found necessary to put Julia in a way of adding something to their resources. They were at this time residing in a small lodging in the suburbs of London; and after looking about for some weeks, they succeeded in getting Julia employed in a ready made linen warehouse in the city. Here she worked early and late, returning home only to sleep; and for scanty wages and indifferent food, performed tasks as monstrous, irksome, and dispiriting, as the labours of a galley slave.

She had been some time chained to this weary captivity, when, one day, a foreigner entered the shop to order a set of shirts; and as he spoke English with difficulty, Julia, who had been taught French by her father, was called from the back room, where the tired fingers plied from morn till night, to act as interpreter. The stranger was evidently struck with her, and on some pretence or another he repeated his visit on the following day; but this time he came not alone. He was accompanied by an Englishman, younger than himself, and of a much more showy exterior. At the first difficulty of apprehension that arose betwixt the

mistress of the shop and the foreigner, the Englishman was about to explain; but the other making him a signal not to interfere, requested the assistance of the young lady who had served as interpreter on the preceding day; adding, in a low tone to his friend, "I am going to show you a pretty girl."

Julia was again called forward; and if the Frenchman had admired her, the Englishman seemed to admire her much more; at least his admiration was much more openly exhibited, and from that day he neglected no means of making an impression on the heart of the young sempstress. He almost daily returned to the shop with his friend, who had first introduced him, or with other foreigners, and although it was evident to Julia that he spoke French with facility, he always declined exercising this accomplishment, and requested her assistance. His next step was to hover about the door at night, till the hours of labour were expired, and the poor prisoners set free; and then he would accompany her home. At first the timid girl was as much frightened as flattered; but gradually the attention of her admirer gained upon her, till at last her daily toil was cheered by the prospect of her evening walk.

But, as may be imagined, this devotion on the part of the lover was by no means disinterested. He looked to be rewarded for his pains; and lost no opportunity of dilating on the wretchedness of the life she was leading, and of pointing out how much happier she might be, if she would throw herself on his protection, and allow him to provide her with all the appliances of ease, comfort, and leisure, to which she was so much a stranger, and which her beauty and merit so fully entitled her to enjoy.

Poor Julia was not gifted with much power of resistance, and the serpent charmed her wisely, for she was wearied to the very marrow of the life she led; but there was one link that held her still, and that was her father. She loved him and she pitied him; and she knew that to leave him, was to extract the last drop of cordial from his cup.

One night she had been kept at her work later than usual, and when at length, she was released, her usually constant attendant was not to be seen. She concluded he was weary of waiting, and had gone away, so she hastened home through the cold, wet, foggy streets as fast as she could; for it was winter, and she was anxious to gain the shelter of her own humble

lodging, and the warmth that her scantily furnished bed clothes could supply.

She rang the door bell, expecting her mother, who was in the habit of sitting up for her, to open it—but no one came. She rang again and again. At length, a window above opened, and a voice, which she recognised as that of the owner of the house, inquired who was there.

“It’s me,” replied Julia; “is my mother gone to bed?”

“Your mother!” exclaimed the woman in an angry tone, “your mother’s gone to gaol, and your father too; and I recommend you to go after them. It’s the fittest place for them, beggarly French folks, as they are! I only wish they’d been there long ago, instead of living in my parlour floor for nothing, for I’ve not seen the colour of their money this six months, I’ll take my oath. Putting me off from day to day with promises; till at last down comes Giblet the butcher, this morning, and arrests them, and I’m left in the lurch; for all the rags they’ve got put together ar’n’t worth twenty shillings; curse ’em!”

At the close of this oration, the excellent woman shut down the window with a bang; and left Julia standing in the street bewildered with fear and surprise. Had she known more of the

world, she would not have been astonished at that happening at last, which had been long threatening. But she knew wonderfully little. Her speechless mother had been unable to teach her any thing ; and her poor, dejected, disappointed, hopeless father, though he gave her such education as he had the means of communicating, seldom or never conversed with her on general subjects ; but lived on in a sort of dreaming existence, appearing to take no part in the affairs of a world, in which so scanty and bitter a portion had been allotted for him. Friends or acquaintance they had none—they were too poor to make any in a respectable station ; and Julie was too proud, and Valentine too indolent and indifferent to seek, or accept of others. So that their daughter grew up singularly unacquainted with all worldly affairs. She knew they had very little money, but she did not foresee that that little would be reduced to none ; they never told her so ; and as she left home early, and returned to it late, she had neither seen nor heard any thing of the daily struggles and difficulties her parents had to contend with ; and had continued in happy ignorance of the weekly menaces of the butcher and baker, and the hourly objurgations of the landlady.

She waited some time, thinking it impossible the woman could intend to shut her out, and expecting every instant to hear her foot in the passage; but she was overrating the hostess's benevolence. That worthy woman, on closing the window, had straightways returned to her bed, drawn the blankets comfortably round her shoulders, and whilst Julia was shivering at the door below, was gradually subsiding into an easy doze.

At length when waiting seemed vain, the poor girl turned off the step, and stood looking through the hazy atmosphere up and down the street, at a loss which way to go, or where to apply for shelter.

"If I knew where my father and mother are confined," said she to herself, "I'd go there and try to get admittance;" and she bethought herself of addressing her inquiries to the butcher. But when she reached the spot where she had been often sent for a pound of coarse beef, or a few bones of the scrag of mutton, she recollected that the man had only a stall there, and had his dwelling in some neighbouring street—where, she knew not. She could think of but one other alternative; it was to go back to the shop where she worked, and try to get shelter there.

Perhaps as she tramped back through the weary way she had trod but an hour before, when she believed she was hastening to her parents and her bed, she contrasted the *then* and the *now*; the former state appearing, now that it was lost, so much better than she had imagined it—the present seeming worse if possible than it was; and she felt how, in the depths of poverty and wretchedness, there is a lower deep remaining still—and, perhaps, she thought of her lover.

With a faint heart she approached the door, for her mistress was a hard woman, and would doubtless be angry at being disturbed at so late an hour—her hand was upon the bell to ring it, when an arm was thrown round her waist, and a well known and too welcome voice, said, “Julia, my love, what are you doing here at this time of night?”

“I’m going to ask Mrs. Walker to let me sleep here, Sir,” replied she; for the timid Julia had never got beyond *Sir*.

“On what account?” inquired he. “Why don’t you go home?”

“I have been home, and they won’t let me in, Sir,” answered Julia.

“Your father and mother won’t let you in!” ejaculated he, with surprise.

"It is not my father and mother, Sir," returned she, unwilling to expose the real cause of her dilemma—"they're not at home—it's the woman of the house."

A glimmering of the truth broke on the mind of the young man, who, by the way, had made himself known to her as Mr. William Godfrey; and the opportunity seemed too favourable to be lost. He soon extracted from the simple girl all she knew of her parent's situation; and he then eloquently represented to her the probable abuse and insult she would draw upon herself by an application to Mrs. Walker; whose stock of compassion being far too limited to divide betwixt the twenty poor young sempstresses she employed, each of whom had miseries enough to have engrossed the whole of it, had prudently closed the avenues of her heart to all their sorrows and sufferings at once, thus sparing herself pain, and them disappointment.

"Then," continued he, "even if she were to take you into the house now, which as I said before, she won't, what are you to do to-morrow night, and the next night, and for months that your father'll be in prison—perhaps for his life?—Nothing more common, I assure you, than

these sort of events. You can't earn enough to pay for lodging, fire, and so forth for yourself and your mother; and she can do nothing by your own admission. How much better trust to me. You shall have every comfort yourself, and something to assist your parents. Come, Julia, be advised," and he wound his arms with tenderness about her, and pressed her to his heart—"come, my Julia, come, and put your trust in me."

She did put her trust in him; and the remainder of poor Julia's story may be too easily anticipated.

When the father was arrested, the owner of the lodging unhesitatingly turned the mother out of doors; at all events, Julie would have wished to accompany her husband, for extremities of that sort called forth the best part of her character; so she hastily wrote a line to her daughter, desiring her to beg shelter for that night of Mrs. Walker; and in the event of its being denied her she directed her where she would find her parents, intrusting the letter to a neighbour who promised to deliver it. But the ambassadors of the poor are apt to be negligent; the duty was at first deferred, and at last forgotten, till it was too late to be

of any avail. On the following day the mother sought her child at the linen warehouse; but Mrs. Walker knew nothing about her; and after seeking her wherever she thought it possible she might have taken refuge, she returned amazed and disconsolate to her husband.

In the mean time Mr. Godfrey was by no means willing to run the risk of losing his conquest whilst it had yet the charm of novelty. He placed Julia in a lodging a little way out of town, as remote as possible from the direction in which she had formerly lived. Timid, inexperienced, irresolute, and knowing nothing of London but the ground she had been daily in the habit of walking over; in fact, a mere child of sixteen, it required a degree of energy far beyond any thing she could command, either to find her own way to her parents, or to insist on being conducted to them. She ardently desired to see her father, and urged her wishes frequently on her lover; but he put her off on one pretext or another; and in some degree satisfied or at least relieved her mind, by enclosing small sums of money in letters which she wrote, and which he assured her should be duly delivered to her parents.

He was indulgent and kind; whilst she enjoyed many comforts that she had never known before; and as he was occupied by business and other engagements, the hours he passed in her company were too few to give rise to satiety, or afford time for ill temper. She became gradually reconciled to the separation from her parents, a separation, indeed, which as far as regarded her mother had never been very painful; and when at the end of a twelvemonth the little Julia came to awaken a new interest in her heart, and furnish an occupation and amusement for the many hours she had hitherto been doomed to spend alone, she might be said to be really happy, for she was too unknowing and inexperienced to foresee the reverse that awaited her.

Shortly after the birth of the child, Mr. Godfrey announced that he was going on a journey, and should probably be absent about three months; but he left her in the charge of a friend, who was to call frequently and see that she was well taken care of; and he arranged with the people of the house to provide her with board and lodging during the interval.

The friend, who called himself Dyson, endea-

voured, as is the custom of friends, from time immemorial, on the like occasions, to make an interest for himself in the heart of his fair charge ; but Julia was incorruptible. Without being violently in love with Mr. Godfrey, she liked him, and felt grateful to him for the protection and comforts he had afforded her ; and she was moreover bound to him by her passionate affection for the child. It was the first vivid sentiment that had been awakened in her heart, and it rushed over it with the spring and vigour of a newly opened fountain—filled it to the brim, and inspired her with a new life. So she sought no further—her full content was in the cradle of her babe. The only favour therefore she accepted of Mr. Dyson, amongst the numerous attentions offered her, was, that he would find out where her parents had been conveyed, and conduct her to see them ; a request to which he most willingly acceded. But when they arrived at the Fleet, where Valentine had been confined, they learned, that about six months before, some wealthy foreigner who had visited the prison, having been touched by the story of the poor French teacher and his dumb wife, had paid their humble debt and set them free.

Whither they were gone no one could tell, nor did Mr. Dyson's inquiries in the neighbourhood of their former lodging, throw any light on the subject.

Thus Julia lost all traces of her parents, as they had previously done of her; for as for the letters their daughter had intrusted to Mr. Godfrey, they never advanced further on their way to the Fleet than the first convenient fire he came to; and thus was she thrown wholly on the tenderness or compassion of her lover. But alas for the tenderness and compassion of a libertine!

At the end of a few months, Mr. Godfrey returned, and appeared for a little while to take some interest in her and her child; but gradually the interest became weaker, the visits more rare, and the means of maintenance less liberally furnished. Julia was not very speedily alive to the change; for she did not expect it, in the first place; and in the second, her affection for Mr. Godfrey was not of a nature to render her either jealous or susceptible. But, at length, after a gradual alienation of some months, he disappeared altogether, leaving her a letter, in which he strongly recommended her to have recourse to the protection of his

friend Dyson; and promising, provided she followed his advice, to pay her a weekly maintenance for the child.

The poor girl saw no alternative but to walk the streets with her baby in her arms—one lover had forsaken her, and the other swore she should never want a home whilst he had a guinea in his pocket—her heart was with neither of them; it was with her child—so she took him at his word, and accepted his protection.

After some months Mr. Godfrey again returned, and, from that time, he used frequently to visit Mr. and Mrs. Dyson, as they were called. The two gentlemen often went out together at night, and, not uncommonly, made excursions of several days into the country.

This state of things lasted some time, but at length Mr. Dyson's funds seemed to be on the decline, and Julia was often put to sad shifts to furnish the necessities of her scanty table. She was beginning to dread that the time was not far distant when he would actually not have a guinea in his pocket, and that she would be again thrown upon the world, with nothing to rely on but the compassion of her first seducer.

Suddenly, however, the scene brightened; at least, as far as regarded the pecuniary department. Mr. Dyson declared that he had won a large bet at Newmarket; and, careless and profuse of money, Julia's wants were now as liberally supplied, as if the sum were inexhaustible. But with this access of good fortune, came other changes less agreeable. Mr. Dyson was an altered man. His spirits were much more unequal than they had been; his temper much more irritable. He had strange fits of gloom; was suspicious, nervous, restless; curious about things which appeared to Julia of no consequence, and was seized with an unaccountable mania for changing his lodgings.

• In the mean time the money fled; and that at such a rate, that in a very short time their circumstances became as straitened as before the last access of fortune; and poverty stared them in the face. Just at this period Mr. Godfrey called one day, and said, that he had the charge of a young woman from the country, who was on her way to the Continent; that she was taken extremely ill, and had imbibed such an inveterate aversion to the persons he had placed her with, that she talked of giving up her journey altogether,

and returning to her friends. He therefore begged Julia to go and see her, and endeavour to reconcile her to waiting patiently where she was, till her health should permit her to travel. Accordingly, Julia visited the young lady, whose name she learned was Miss Jones, and who was suffering from the effects of a neglected cold, caught, she said, on her journey to London; Mr. Godfrey having neglected to call in medical advice, till she was so bad, that the servant of the house she was lodging in, had one night, taken fright, and ran out for an apothecary, of her own accord, when he was absent.

Miss Jones disowned any sort of attachment to Mr. Godfrey; was quite indignant at Julia's natural suspicion that he was her lover; and declared that she was on her way to the Continent to be married. She was otherwise by no means communicative; and Julia neither learned where she came from, nor whither she was going.

In due time, by the care of the apothecary, she recovered, and Julia was informed that Mr. Godfrey being unable to accompany her abroad, the charge of escorting her to her destination was to devolve on Mr. Dyson.

Accordingly they departed; and in a very short time, as Julia had foreseen, the woman of the house, when she found that the ostensible husband did not return, gave the wife warning to quit within twenty-four hours; adding, that but for the sake of the child, whom she had grown fond of, and whose pretty playful ways might have melted a heart of marble, she should certainly have seized her clothes to pay the arrears of rent. In this dilemma Julia might naturally have applied to Mr. Godfrey for assistance; but with Mr. Dyson's departure, the visits of the friend had ceased; and where to seek him or to address a letter to him, she could not tell; for, from the very commencement of their acquaintance, he had carefully abstained from giving her any information on the subject. Like the wind he came and went—she neither knew whence nor whither.

Fortunately, her wardrobe was tolerably furnished by the liberality of Mr. Dyson; and she had a few trinkets that he had given her in the flush of his fortunes. These she pawned; and after taking a very humble lodging in Holborn, she next proceeded to the shop of her former mistress at the ready-

made linen warehouse, and requested to be supplied with work which she might do at home, where the care of her child confined her. She obtained a little employment, and by the aid of what she thus earned, and the gradual disposal of her wardrobe, she contrived for a time to pay her rent, and purchase food for herself and her infant. But in process of time the wardrobe was exhausted—next, the little girl was seized with measles and hooping cough, and was very ill; some money inevitably went for drugs, and much time was spent in nursing and attendance. Matters became daily worse and worse; the child recovered from the maladies, but remained weak and helpless; pining for want of air and exercise, and craving for food which could not be supplied. The love for the infant, which had hitherto given her energy, and enabled her to support this hard struggle, now that she saw the struggle was in vain, and could no longer be maintained, only added a thousand fold to her despair.

- At length the dreaded night arrived, that found her houseless, penniless, without a friend to turn to, or a hope to cheer; and with the fearful agony of those cruel words "mamma,

I'm so hungry," for ever wringing at her heart.

For several hours she wandered through the streets, the inhospitable streets, that furnish nothing to the penniless wretch that cannot beg—amongst crowds of busy and incurious strangers, hurrying on their several errands and rudely brushing with their elbows, as they passed, the fainting mother and the starving child;—on she wandered. Ever and anon the broad, grey sheet of the gloomy river, with its sable canopy of fog hung over it, appearing betwixt the divisions of the streets, and reminding her that beneath its dark waters there was a last refuge for the destitute—a bed wherein once laid, no sound can wake them, no cold can shiver them, no hunger tear their entrails, nor cries of starving infants pierce their hearts.

Who shall condemn her that she sought its rest?

## CHAPTER XXIV.

WHICH NARRATES THE PROGRESS OF HARRY'S JOURNEY;  
AND HOW HE FELL INTO UNPLEASANT COMPANY.

IT was a fine moonlight night when Harry Leeson leaped over the park gate of Oakfield into the high road, and he walked on bravely—bravely for fifteen. It can't be denied that there was something heavy at his heart; that he thought of what his life and his prospects had been; of his uncle and the happy days at Oakfield when he was alive, and all the world wore smiles for Harry—of Fanny, kind gentle affectionate Fanny, that, although she could not protect him, still loved him as much as ever. It must be confessed too, that he occasionally thought of the comfortable bed he had left behind him; and that when, by dint of walking and the fresh night air he got an

appetite, the alluring picture of the hot rolls, and the well-spread breakfast table in the library, would, in spite of his heroic efforts to despise all such considerations, present themselves to his imagination in a too fascinating form.

Then, though Harry would not have admitted to himself that he was afraid, or that there was any thing to be afraid of; yet ever and anon, when there was a dark turn in the road, or a mysterious looking shadow of some old tree with its arms waving in the wind fell across it; or some restless bird of night fluttered from amongst its branches, and with its ominous cry sailed slowly through the air, there would be something fluttering, too, within poor Harry's breast. But presently would come the brisk rattle of revolving wheels, the lively smack of the coachman's whip, and one of the mails would dash past him; or a heavy wagon would crawl by, and a "good night, master," from the wagoner, would put him in heart again.

Thoughts, too, of the future would intrude. It was not *quite* certain that he would be admitted into one of his Majesty's regiments of the line, rise to be a general, and be knighted,

although it was highly probable—and if this did not happen exactly as Harry had planned, he did not very clearly see what else could. His whole arrangements had been entirely made on this supposition, his castle with all its towers and battlements raised upon this foundation—if it slipped away, there was nothing left—like the *éboulement* of the Rossberg, it carried every thing else with it. Occasional doubts as to whether he had really done the very best thing in the world for himself, would intrude; and once or twice he wondered whether he had been missed; and whether if he walked straight back as fast as he could, and presented himself at the breakfast-table at the usual hour, the escapade might not remain wholly unknown. But he did not turn back; and as the hours advanced, and the distance from Oakfield increased, the experiment became impracticable; and therefore there was nothing left but to walk forward.

As the morning dawned, and human beings began to be stirring, another Gorgon presented itself to Harry's imagination, which filled the place of all those which had been only visions of the night, and were now melting away, in the bright beams of the rising sun. This was the

fear of being overtaken, and carried back in triumph by Gaveston; to be taunted, jeered, insulted, laughed at; and finally forced, without the means of resistance, to accompany him wherever he pleased to take him, and conform to whatever arrangements he chose to make for him.

"No!" said Harry, with a swelling heart, "never! I'd rather do any thing in the world! I'd rather be a common soldier, if I can't be an officer—I'd even rather get my living as a servant in some nice family, where the people would be kind to me, perhaps, when they found I was a gentleman—I'd submit to any thing, any thing in the world, so that I can feel I'm my own master, and not dependent upon that fellow! And by the by," thought he, "surely, now that it's daylight, I'm very wrong to be walking along this high road, where I may be traced so easily if they send in pursuit of me. I'll strike off across the country instead of keeping the direct line to London, and find my way thither by some other route."

Upon this, Harry leaped over the first stile he came to, cut across several fields, till he found himself in a very rural district, amongst hop gardens and pretty farm houses; and on

arriving at a neat little village, where he saw a pink horse standing upon three legs over a door, he entered and inquired if he could have some breakfast.

' A clean, healthy, honest-looking woman answered him in the affirmative; and showing him into a neat little sanded parlour, furnished with wooden chairs, deal tables, and adorned with whole-length portraits of the Marquis of Granby, the Duke of Cumberland, and other worthies, she soon set before him an excellent breakfast of brown bread, sweet butter, new milk for his tea, and a smoking rasher of bacon for a relish.

Harry did justice to his fare, and felt himself an emperor. It was a capital commencement to his adventures; and it was the first breakfast that had ever been served at his own command and paid for from his own pocket. In short, it was the first independent bread and butter Harry had ever eaten, and he relished it accordingly.

The woman was so civil, too; and after breakfast, having refreshed himself by dipping his head in some cold water, and having had his clothes brushed, he strolled into the little garden behind the house, where she invited

him to make free with the fruit ; in fine the quarters were very agreeable, and Harry had walked all night ; the village, moreover, was in a sheltered nook, quite off the direct road, where it was very unlikely he would be sought for ; so after some consideration, he resolved to remain there till the next morning.

An excellent dinner of eggs and bacon and hasty pudding, made an agreeable diversion in his day's amusement ; after which, throwing himself across a row of wooden chairs that stood against the wall, he fell fast asleep—and, as soundly as if he had been on a bed of down, slept till his hostess came to inquire if he would have any tea. The tea, with its due accompaniment of bread and butter, being swallowed in a sort of somniferous medium between sleeping and waking, he immediately afterwards retired to the humble but clean bed that had been provided for him ; and there, in a state of complete oblivion of all the joys and sorrows of this world, passed the hours till morning. Poor Harry ! it was too good a beginning to last.

He awoke the next morning in a condition of perfect comfort ; and having devoured a second edition of the good breakfast, and made some inquiries about his road, he started again on

his journey; and in this manner he continued to travel, keeping as wide as he could of the high road from Oakfield to London; walking by day and resting by night, till he had arrived within twenty miles of the great city. And so far he reached without any adventure worth recording. The small country inns he put up at, afforded him all the accommodation he needed; the guests he met at them were chiefly the honest farmers of the neighbourhood; the hosts were civil, the charges low, the weather fine, and the country pleasant; no one asked him whence he came or whither he was going; and Harry indulged himself with easy stages by day and sound sleeps by night.

It was about seven o'clock on the evening of his last day's journey, for he looked to make his entrée into London on the following morning, that he stepped into a small inn by the road side, which, not only with respect to its situation, but in its appearance also, bore a less rural and inviting aspect than those he had hitherto put up at. The sign was "The Admiral;" and exalted on a high pole about three yards from the door, swung a rude representation of Admiral Jarvis. There was a trough for watering horses on one side of the house,

and a set of ill-conditioned looking stables on the other. The echo of rude voices resounded from within ; and a powerful odour of beer and tobacco exhaled through the open door.

Harry hesitated a little, for none of his senses were invited by the tokens they detected ; but he had already extended his walk an hour beyond its usual limits in the hope of meeting with some desirable gîte ; but these he perceived became more rare as he approached London. The character of the small inns became less rural, the hosts less simple and civil ; and the company he met, less unobjectionable. However, he was tired ; and reflecting that by going further he might fare worse, he resolved to content himself with such accommodation as "The Admiral" afforded.

"How now, Master?" said a big bluff man, who advanced from an open door on the right, with a pewter porter pot in his hand, and wearing a blue apron, one corner of which was turned up and tucked into the waistband—"What's to say?"

"I wish to know if I can have some supper, and a bed here," replied Harry, rather abashed by the rude address.

"There's little doubt of that," replied the

host, taking a deliberate survey of Harry's accoutrements, "if so be that you can pay the score."

"Certainly I can," answered Harry, not a little offended at the doubt expressed. "I don't expect you to feed me, nor lodge me either for nothing."

"No offence, Master, no offence!" cried the rude host; "but it's as well to be on the safe side; we get all sorts here."

Harry felt a great inclination to turn round and walk out; but he was afraid that, if he did so, the man would be insolent to him; so he followed him into a small back room that looked on the stable yard, where he requested he might have some tea; which the host promised should be forthcoming immediately.

The room itself was evidently one reserved for such select visitors as preferred being alone to joining the smokers and porter and grog consumers that assembled in the other. The walls were covered with a dull-looking paper that appeared to have once been blue, but in which now neither pattern nor colour was discernible; numerous stains of liquor, and sundry bare places where long stripes had been peeled off, testified that the occupants of even

that choice apartment did not always confine themselves within the limits of temperance and decorum. A small square bit of carpet with torn edges that laid traps for the toes, and of as nondescript a hue as the paper, was spread in the middle of the room, and over it stood an old battered, shattered, leaf and a half of a mahogany dining table, scored, scratched, and blotted with all manner of disfigurements. Four ancient chairs with high backs, and black hair seats which had once been stuffed, but from which the chief part of the contents had either been consumed by moths, or abstracted through the large holes that appeared in the hair cloth, completed the furniture of this best apartment of the inn at B—. The window was exceedingly dirty, and cut all over with plebeian names, and coarse rhymes; and a bit of torn, faded, green stuff of an open texture, affected, in the form of a blind, to shut out the view of the stable yard from the eye of the genteel customer within; or to defend him from the obtrusive curiosity of the profane vulgar without. The window appeared never to have been opened within the memory of man; and the odour of the apartment, in which there was no chimney, perfectly corresponded with its other attractions.

The wretched appointments of the tea table, the battered tray, the cracked cup and saucer, the black pot with the remnant of a spout, the notched and broken knife, the stale, dirty looking, ill-baked bread it was to cut, the strong, yellow, salt butter, the coarse dingy lump sugar, and the pale blue drop of milk in a broken black ewer, were all in accordance. It was Harry's first introduction to the ungraceful adjuncts of poverty and humble life. Till now the experiences of his journey had not disclosed to him their vulgar and offensive side. The rural inns, with their clean whitewashed walls, their sanded floors, their chairs and tables of well-scrubbed deal, their neat gardens filled with cabbages, and French beans, and gooseberry and currant bushes, mingled with pinks, and sweet peas, and hollyhocks, with a venerable apple tree in one corner, and a little arbour twined with honeysuckles and sweet briar in the other—all this was lowly and simple, but not vulgar. Nothing that is pure and simple can be vulgar; but the dirty, stained paper, the faded, ragged carpet, and the mahogany table and chairs, in the select room of the inn at B—, were all essentially vulgar, for they were intended to be genteel.

Harry's high hopes and the exaltation of his spirits fell with his fortunes. Here was already a reverse; a taste of the future, always supposing he was not made a general and a grand cross of the Bath; the certainty of which events varied with the height of the quicksilver in the barometer of his comforts. It is delightful to be independent, and feel that one is master of his own actions; but Harry found it impossible to enjoy these privileges to their full extent in the best room of the inn at B—; so, tired as he was, when he had taken enough of his uninviting repast to appease the most urgent calls of his appetite, he went to the door to get a breath of fresh air; but the vulgar merriment, and the vulgar odours from within, still assailing his ears and his nostrils, he walked across the road, and swung his legs over a gate that led into a turnip field.

In this position he had sat some time, when he observed two men approaching from the London side, who on reaching the house, having taken a survey of its exterior, turned in. They both wore shabby black coats and hats with very small brims; and had that undefinable appearance of belonging to no recognised class, that led the beholder to

imagine that they lived by no acknowledged means, but upon such means as accident or the exercise of their own enterprise or dexterity might furnish.

Harry thought no more of them, but turned his reflections on his own affairs; till they again attracted his attention by appearing at the door together. They seemed in close consultation; and one of them held a printed paper in his hand to which they occasionally referred, whilst they cast their eyes so frequently across the road to where Harry was sitting, that he began to feel uncomfortable, and to fancy they were speaking of him.

So much did this notion prevail, that, at length, he descended from the gate on the other side, and walked up the field, which was divided by a path in the middle. When he had moved a little way, he could not help turning his head to see what the men were doing; and he perceived that they were both leaning over the gate he had just left, and were looking after him.

Harry felt exceedingly annoyed, and began to be assailed with unpleasant suspicions. It occurred to him, could they be emissaries of Gaveston's! They looked men fit for any

mischievous or ill service ; and their attention was certainly singularly directed to him. At the extremity of the field was a stile which gave access to another ; he crossed it ; and when he did so the men leaped over the gate, and walked up the turnip field, as if resolved to keep him still in view.

- This was so disagreeable, and he felt so much averse to the idea of finding himself in their company remote from the house, that when he had crossed the second field, instead of going further, he seated himself on the stile ; upon which they drew up, and seated themselves upon the opposite one.

It was too evident to Harry that they were watching him ; and a host of apprehensions and suspicions rushed into his mind with the conviction. Either they were sent in search of him ; or they were induced, by perceiving he was a young gentleman, alone and unprotected, to form some evil design against his person or his pocket.

“ Perhaps they suppose I have money, and they mean to rob me,” said he ; “ and if they take what little I have, what am I to do when I get to London ? ” And as the evening was drawing on, he thought he should be safer

near the house; "and there's my bundle, by the by, in that parlour; somebody may walk off with that too," he added, as he jumped off the stile and turned his steps towards the inn.

When the two men saw him move, they followed his example; and lounging slowly back, "marshalled him the way that he was going"—Macbeth's dagger could not be more disagreeable.

Harry to avoid them walked straight into the house, and into his odious parlour; where, however, he found the pocket handkerchief that contained all his worldly goods, quite safe. He was hungry, and would have been glad of some supper; and tired, and would have been glad to go to bed; but he distrusted both the supper and the bed. He doubted the roof he was under being an honest one; and of all places in the world, bed is the least inviting where such a suspicion prevails—even according to the landlord's own admission, "he got all sorts there;" and the sample Harry had seen, slight as was his experience of mankind, unpleasantly confirmed the assertion. So as he felt he must do something, for it was impossible to sit in the wretched room doing nothing, he decided on the supper as the least evil of the two.

The supper, when it appeared, promised better than the tea—it was more in the line of business at “the Admiral,” where such “thin potations,” were seldom called for; and the remains of a cold round of beef, the loaf he had at tea, and a pint of porter in a pewter pot, graced the dirty and scanty table cloth.

Harry had just cut himself a slice of meat and a corner of the loaf, and was preparing to make himself some amends for his previous fast, when the door opened, and the landlord ushered in the two *bêtes noires*—the two odious men in black—announcing that the gentlemen requested permission to join the young gentleman at supper.

Banquo’s ghost was not a more unwelcome visitor. Harry coloured to the eyes, and looked confused and annoyed, but he had not courage to object. In fact, he had a notion that his objections, had he made any, would have been of very little avail; so he went on eating his supper as composed as he could, without raising his eyes from his plate, or taking any notice of his company. The landlord brought them knives, and forks, and plates, and a pot of porter; and they straightway helped themselves, and began to feed like ostriches.

"Here's to you, Sir," said one of them, raising the pewter vessel to his lips. Harry bowed.

"You don't feed, Sir," continued the man. "One 'ud expect a youngster like you'd be more peckish after your walk. And this here round's capital."

"I've eat very well," replied Harry, who might have added, "the sauce has spoiled the supper."

"I take it, now, you've truded some miles since sunrise?" pursued the man.

"Not far," answered Harry, wishing to imply that he rather belonged to the neighbourhood, than came from a distance.

"How many miles can you do in a day, now, without knocking up?" continued the questioner.

"I really don't know," replied Harry, "I never tried."

"Perhaps twenty?" said the man.

"Perhaps I might if I tried," said Harry.

"Twenty a day, keeping on for four or five days running, is enough for a youngster at your age," observed the man who had not before spoken.

Harry thought the speech singular; for it

was just five days since he left Oakfield ; and the twenty miles a day had been much about his rate of travelling.

"How does the country look downwards?" inquired the first speaker.

"I've not seen much of the country," said Harry. "I believe it's looking very well."

"Hops looking pretty smartish?" asked the man.

"Odd again," thought Harry. "How should he know that I have come through the hop districts? I don't know, I'm sure," he answered.

"You're making direct for Lunnun, I take it?" said the second man.

"To be sure he is," said the other, perceiving that Harry was not disposed to answer. "That's the place to make a fortin in. Isn't it, Sir?"

"I don't know, indeed," said Harry, sulkily, "I never was there."

"No, no, you arn't there yet," said the man, with a sneer; "but you're going, you know. I take it, now, you reckon upon being there to-morrow; don't you?"

"I'm by no means sure I'm going there at all," replied Harry, whose cheeks were by this

time crimson with vexation and annoyance, and whose countenance plainly denoted his feelings.

"Oh, you shouldn't balk yourself," said the man, in an ironical tone; "in for a penny in for a pound—neck or nothing. I'm always for carrying things through, I am. You'll be off, I s'pose, by times in the morning?"

To this inquiry Harry made no answer.

"I wonder what o'clock it is," said the second man. "Have you a watch, Larkins?"

"No, I ha'n't," replied Larkins. "Perhaps you can tell us what o'clock it is, Sir?" added he, addressing Harry, and directing his eye to where the boy's little chain and seals hanging out, betokened that he had a watch within.

Harry did not know how to evade answering the question, so he unwillingly drew out poor Fanny's present, for it was a watch she had given him on his birthday; and his initials and crest were engraven on it.

"It's half-past nine," he answered; and was about to replace his timepiece in his pocket; when the man nearest him stretched out his hand, and without violence, but in a manner

that denoted he was determined to have it, took it away from him.

Harry started up, for he thought they intended to rob him.

"Sit down, Sir, sit down ; don't be flurried," said the man. "No harm's meant. You shall have your watch again directly ; I only want to look at it."

"Rale metal," observed Larkins, as he and his companion examined the watch ; observing the initials, the engravings on the seals, and opening it to read the maker's name ; after which they handed it back to Harry ; and asked him if he'd join them in a glass of brandy and water ; to which polite invitation he answered in the negative, and said he was going to bed. They admitted that he couldn't do better, as he'd be the fitter for his next day's journey ; so with that encouragement, he rang the bell, and asked to be shown to his bedroom.

A dirty drab of a girl brought him a flaring bit of tallow candle in a tall, crooked, copper candlestick, and desired him to follow her.

"I'll take care to lock my door," thought he, as he took leave of his friends, "and I'll

be off by daylight in the morning, that I may escape them, if possible ;” but he didn’t feel very sure that it *would* be possible ; for he still believed, that for some purpose or another, they were watching his proceedings.

## CHAPTER XXV.

HARRY MAKES AN EFFORT TO PART COMPANY WITH THE TWO GENTLEMEN IN BLACK; AND MEETS WITH ANOTHER ADVENTURE.

"WELL," exclaimed Larkins, when Harry had closed the door, "ar'n't this prime luck?"

"It's the right covey," said the other, taking a printed paper from his pocket. "No mistake."

"Read it," said Larkins.

"Fifty pounds reward," said the other, spreading the paper on the table before him, "Left his home, on the night of the 15th, from the neighbourhood of Mapleton—a young gentleman, five feet three and a half in height, figure slight, fair complexion, hair brown; eyes dark, features handsome. He wore a blue jacket with a velvet collar, a black silk waist-

coat, iron grey trowsers, and a black ribbon round his neck ; and is supposed to have carried a small bundle, in a red silk handkerchief. He had also a silver watch, on which were engraven the letters H. L. and a crest. Maker's name Grierson. Fifty pounds will be given to whoever will bring the above young gentleman safely to No. 7, Mark Lane ; or give such information as shall lead to his discovery."

"All right," said Larkins, "ev'ry par-tick'ler."

"D'you think he smokes us ?" said the other, whose name was Gomm.

"He don't like us," said Larkins, "but that's nat'ral. Thinks we want to pluck him."

"All he's got about him, watch and all, wouldn't fetch ten pounds," answered Gomm.

"No, no," said Larkins : "t'other's the go ; all safe too."

"Let's have another jorum," said Gomm—"the covey 'll pay the tick," so they called for another edition of brandy and water, and invited the landlord to give them his company.

"You're in luck, gentlemen," said the host, when he heard their story. "It might have fell to me, if I'd seen the bill ; for I'd a notion

from the first he was on a lark, and had a mind to ax him a few questions; but he held up his head, and war'n't over communicative."

"It was just an accident," said Gomm, "that I see'd it. We were coming through Southwark yesterday, and I spied a man afore us sticking the bills; so I stopped to read one on 'em—and I said says I to Larkins, that'ud be a fine fish to catch, if we could light on him—"

"Let's get his marks, says I," said Larkins, intersecting the course of his friend's narration, "who knows but we may light on him? The road we're going's as like as any for him to take, if he's making for Lunnun; as they all do, when they go upon a lark."

"So I ax'd the fellow for a bill," said Gomm; "and sure enough what should I see as we come down the road but the very identical covey."

"*You* see'd him!" exclaimed Larkins, "*I* see'd him, if you please. You'd ha' walked on, and never stopped till we got to Rochester, as we'd fixed on, if I hadn't twigged him."

"I had my eye on him," said Gomm, "afore ever you spoke, and had been surveying him for some time."

"Why didn't you say so then?" asked Larkins.

"Cause 't was no use speaking till I was sure," answered Gomm; "besides he was looking at us, and I didn't want to set him a suspecting of any thing till we had him safe. He might ha' been off afore we'd time to see his marks."

Upon this Mr. Larkins contradicted Mr. Gomm, and asserted that he was sure he had not seen him till he had himself drawn his attention to the lad swinging on the gate. Mr. Gomm swore that he had; and added that if he hadn't first observed the bill-sticker in Southwark, Mr. Larkins would never have known any thing about the fugitive at all; and thus, from less to more, they quarrelled as to who had contributed most to the discovery, and who had a claim upon the largest share of the fifty pounds. In short, each felt that he could have accomplished the business as well by himself, and was not disposed to admit a partnership in the reward. When they had quarrelled sufficiently, the host interfered, and succeeded in bringing about a reconciliation; upon which they called for more liquor, and sat drinking far into the night.

The bed-room to which Harry ascended, was not raised more than half-a-dozen stairs above the ground-floor, and appeared to be a small offset from the house built over the stable-yard. It contained two beds standing near together, each furnished with blue checked curtains, and a red worsted quilt. The rest of the appointments consisted of two chairs, which had once had straw seats, but had now scarcely any seats at all; a rickety painted table, with an old looking glass on it, that being cracked across the middle, presented to the eye of the curious, two half faces that did not appear to have any connexion with each other; a washing stand, with the legs tied, to keep them from a disunion which would have been fatal to the security of the whole body, together with that of a cracked basin and ewer it supported.

"Is there a key to the door?" inquired Harry of the girl, as he examined the lock.

"A key!" said she, "no; what do you want with a key?"

"To lock the door," replied Harry, "to be sure."

"Lock the door!" exclaimed the girl, looking at him with astonishment at so unreasonable a proposition, "how be the other company to get in, if you locks the door?"

"Other company!" said Harry. "What other company? You mustn't put any body else into this room."

"Must'nt I?" said the girl. "Where be the gentlemen to sleep then, when we ha'n't no other room?"

"What gentlemen?" asked Harry.

"The two gentlemen as supped in the best parlour," answered the servant. "They've bespoken this here t'other bed."

"I won't let any body sleep in my room," said Harry.

"What for?" said she contemptuously, "you can't sleep in both beds yourself, can you? Where's the harm of having two Christ'ens to sleep in the room with you?" and without waiting to hear further objections to an arrangement that appeared to her so unobjectionable, she walked out of the room.

Harry stood aghast! To sleep in the room with the two odious men in black! The thing was impossible! There was not only disgust, but an overpowering sense of danger—"Then that was why they gave me back my watch," said he, "because they can take it in the night, and perhaps they mean to murder me too!"

Whether Gaveston had sent them to find him

out, or whether their object was plunder, that they had evil designs against him he felt assured. How was he to escape them? Should he throw himself on the protection of the landlord? But he was by no means certain that the landlord was any better than his customers. He still heard the voices of the noisy toppers in the front room below, that echoed with their rude merriment, and vulgar songs; but if he addressed his apprehensions to them what could he expect but insult and laughter? Harry, like other boys, had read strange stories of treacherous hosts, and murdered travellers; and he searched about for the trap door through which his body was to be conveyed away when they had murdered him; and, Oh horror! he found it! There was actually a trap in the floor. Here was the confirmation of his worst suspicions! He had fallen into a den of thieves and murderers, and was doomed to die the death of his poor uncle; to be murdered in an inn! Oh, how he arraigned his folly! How he wished himself back under Fanny's roof! There danger could not reach him; and whilst she knew where he was, Gaveston dared not have touched his life. But now, no one knew where he was; he was without defence, without

protection ; and without peril to his enemies he might be put out of the way and his destiny never discovered.

He softly opened the door, and listened to the voices below. He not only heard those in the front room, but he distinguished those of his friends in the back parlour. He thought there was a third amongst them ; and on venturing a little nearer, he discovered it was that of the landlord. The front door of the house stood wide open the while, and looked very inviting. The door of the parlour was shut, but that of the front room was partly open ; he discerned the light shining into the passage. Should he be able to pass unobserved ? Or, if the occupants of the room saw him, would they stop him ?

He was yet debating these essential points when the door of the parlour opened, and the landlord came out. Harry had barely time to retreat out of sight. The host passed into the front room, and said something to the people in it. Harry gently closed his room door that the light within might not betray him ; and then concealing his person behind a projection of the wainscot, he watched the proceedings below. Presently the landlord came out again,

and went into his bar, which was on the opposite side of the passage to the best parlour, and in a few minutes he descried Sal, the maid-servant who had turned such a deaf ear to his expostulations, bearing a tray into the front room, on which were sundry pewter pots, jugs, and glasses. She then returned to the bar; and, anon, the landlord himself appeared, loaded with a fresh supply of liquor, which he carried into the back parlour, and shut the door; and ere long, he heard his voice mingling with that of Larkins and Gomm in loud debate.

"Now," thought Harry, "is my time. They'll none of them stir till they've drank that, at all events;" and he stepped back into his room and fetched his bundle and his hat; which last article, in the heat of his suspicions of the gentlemen in black, he had fortunately brought up stairs with him.

He came out softly; and after waiting an instant to take a final survey, he had just set his foot on the first stair, when, to his dismay, Sal the maid came out of the bar, and banged to the front door; after which she again returned into her den.

Here was a catastrophe! His last hope cut off; for it was utterly impossible he could open

the door without being heard. He returned to his room, and sitting down on the side of his miserable bed, he burst into tears. He was, then, doomed to die in that wretched place; and he wondered if his poor mamma was looking down from heaven in pity for his melancholy fate. Her sweet, gentle face rose up before him—so did the image of his kind uncle, and all the friends who had ever loved him. His poor heart swelled as if it would burst with the agony of these tender memories and regrets; and the bitter contrast betwixt the past and the present.

When the paroxysm had a little abated, he again rose and looked out; all below was as it had been; the outer door still closed. Suddenly, he thought of the window; it could not be very high, for the room was an *entresol*, little raised above the lower floor. He shut his door again, and examined the window. It was in the lattice fashion, consisting of small three cornered pieces of glass, united by leaden bands, and opened in the centre with a latch.

He unfastened it, and looked out—the distance from the ground was nothing to an active boy, more especially one who was flying for his life. The only thing to be feared was,

that there might be some one yet stirring in the stable-yard ; but all seemed quiet. He stepped back and closed the curtains of his bed all around ; untied his bundle and threw the red handkerchief conspicuously across the back of a chair by the bed side ; extinguished the candle, and set that also on the chair, as if it had been put out after he was in bed ; and then without further pause or deliberation, he let himself down from the window, hanging by the sill with one hand, whilst he closed it after him with the other. All was as quiet as he could desire. He stepped softly past the window of the best parlour, and heard the voices of his dreaded companions apparently raised in anger ; they were just then in the crisis of their dispute, as to whom belonged the merit of first discovering Harry. He was afraid there might be a dog ; but there was none ; and he passed under the little archway into the high road ; crossed it, and fled across the fields that he had walked over in the evening. He remembered to have seen smoke rising from a chimney somewhere in that direction ; it might be from a farmhouse where he could claim protection ; and, at all events, he thought his enemies would be more likely to pursue him, if they

chose to do so at all, along the high road than across the country.

For some time, Harry walked on very fast, occasionally varying his pace with a run ; and in the energy that his terror lent him, forgetting that he was tired.

At length, however, his legs took the liberty of reminding him that they had been going all day ; and he would have been very glad to have found an open barn door, or some sort of shelter where he might have obtained a few hours' rest ; but nothing of the sort presented itself. Indeed Harry was approaching a neighbourhood where people leave nothing open that they can keep closed—he was drawing near to Gravesend.

Delicately nurtured as he had been, he was afraid to lie down and sleep upon the damp grass ; and afraid, too, lest his pursuers might steal upon him whilst he slept ; but he was too exhausted to go further without some respite, and he looked about for a seat that would afford him a place of repose. The moon that had lighted him from Oakfield was waning now, but the night was clear ; and the purple canopy above him was spangled with countless gems. The field he was in, was the last of a

that there might be some one yet stirring in the stable-yard ; but all seemed quiet. He stepped back and closed the curtains of his bed all around ; untied his bundle and threw the red handkerchief conspicuously across the back of a chair by the bed side ; extinguished the candle, and set that also on the chair, as if it had been put out after he was in bed ; and then without further pause or deliberation, he let himself down from the window, hanging by the sill with one hand, whilst he closed it after him with the other. All was as quiet as he could desire. He stepped softly past the window of the best parlour, and heard the voices of his dreaded companions apparently raised in anger ; they were just then in the crisis of their dispute, as to whom belonged the merit of first discovering Harry. He was afraid there might be a dog ; but there was none ; and he passed under the little archway into the high road ; crossed it, and fled across the fields that he had walked over in the evening. He remembered to have seen smoke rising from a chimney somewhere in that direction ; it might be from a farmhouse where he could claim protection ; and, at all events, he thought his enemies would be more likely to pursue him, if they

his eye, and showed him he was going the wrong way; the persons were approaching by the road; his only resource was to crouch down under the hedge; which he did instinctively; although, as the strangers were coming from an opposite direction, he had no particular reason to fear them, nor to suppose they were in pursuit of him.

They gradually drew near, walking very slowly; and speaking so low, that Harry couldn't catch a word of the conversation. He listened intensely to ascertain if the voices were those of Larkins and Gomm; but he couldn't be certain. At length, however, when they reached the stile they stopped, and he was afraid they were about to cross it; but instead of doing so, they drew up, and placing their backs against it, they continued their colloquy.

"There's no danger of our being suspected," said one of the persons. "Every man on 'em thinks we are at sea in the Halifax. They don't know we got ashore again at Scilly. How should they?"

"I take it she's sure to drop down with the tide to-morrow," said the other.

"Sure enough," answered the first. "But s'pose she didn't she'll be down next tide."

"But then she might be off next morning, and that wouldn't do, no how."

"She'll be down to-morrow," said the first. "Bill Jones heard the Captain say so for sartain."

"Is Bill sure of the second watch?"

"Sartain," said the other. "If all's right, he'll hang a white flag over her starboard. If we don't see the white flag, we're to keep off. If so be it's as clear as it is to-night we should see it from the shore; but a cloudy sky would suit better."

"There's no fear but what he's got the chest aboard with him, I s'pose?" said the second speaker.

"Sure to have it," replied the first; "promised to take it out with him this voyage, 'cause the girl's to be spliced, and wants it. Bill heard him order his own servant to fetch it. The only fear I know is, that he may sleep ashore. He does sometimes, but not often."

"It'oud be the easier done," answered the second; "there'd be no difficulty then what-somed'ever."

"And let him off?" exclaimed the first. "Not if I can help it. Whatever you may think on't, I'd sooner have his life than the

jewels, if so be I could only have one on 'em—b—t him !”

“The sun'll be up in another hour,” observed the second ; “we'd better be moving off.”

“We'll keep ourselves snug at the Pretty Polly till nightfall,” said the first, as they moved away—“we shall see her coming down along——” and the remainder of the sentence was lost to Harry. “Villains too,” said he to himself, “but they are not my villains, at any rate. However, it's fortunate I hid myself, for they might have robbed me, if they'd done nothing worse.”

Lest he should fall in with them, Harry thought it advisable to remain where he was till the sun was above the horizon ; and then, his valour fortified by the broad light of the day, he jumped over the stile, and directed his steps to the westward, which he knew must be the side London lay on.

He had scarcely advanced a mile, when he was cheered by the sight of a large town, with the thin smoke of the newly lighted fires curling up through the atmosphere, and the tall masts of numerous vessels, some with their blue peters waving in the breeze, appearing at intervals between the chimneys.

With renewed vigour he quickened his pace ; and having passed through the suburbs, where he remarked several inns that bore a striking resemblance, hosts as well as houses, to the one he had fled from in the night, he soon found himself at the entrance of a long, decent looking street ; where perceiving an elderly man taking down the shutters from a respectable shop, he requested he would recommend him to an inn. The man pointed out one two doors off, where he assured him he would be very comfortable ; Harry, following his advice, addressed himself to a sleepy looking waiter he saw standing at the door, who forthwith introduced him into the coffee room ; there, after a reasonable interval, he procured some breakfast, and then, weary and exhausted, he went to bed.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

HARRY MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE, AND PROVES  
HIMSELF A HERO.

IN a blessed oblivion of the two gentlemen in black, and of all his other troubles, Harry spent the day succeeding the eventful night, the history of which we have detailed in the last chapter, and he might possibly have slept for twelve hours more, but that the chambermaid, whose good-will had been won by his handsome face and pleasing manners in the morning when she conducted him to his room, took the liberty of putting in her head to investigate the cause of his protracted silence and eclipse. He was still fast asleep, and she walked up to his bedside to look at him. Harry opened his eyes, and beheld the round, good-humoured face of the woman leaning over his pillow.

"Is it time to get up?" said he, not recollect-

ing at first the circumstances that had brought him there.

"You need not get up if you don't like, my dear," said she; "but you'd better let me bring you some tea. You've had no dinner; and you'll be starved."

"I think I should like some tea," said Harry, sitting up in the bed.

"I'll bring you some," said the woman; "what would you like to eat?"

"I think I'll get up," said Harry, beginning to shake off the drowsiness of his long slumber. "I believe I've had sleep enough."

"You must have walked a great way to be so tired," remarked the chambermaid. "Had you been travelling all night?"

"A great part of it," replied Harry. "And besides that I'd a sad fright. I put up at an inn where I'd reason to suspect they'd some bad designs against me, and I ran away."

"Lawk, my dear," said the chambermaid, "sure they would not hurt such a lamb as you!"

"I don't know," replied he, "I can tell you I'm very glad I got away. The chambermaid was such a wretch too—very unlike you I assure you."

This last compliment completed Harry's conquest, and Jenny having satisfied herself that he was provided with every thing he wanted in his room, proceeded down stairs in order to use her interest with the waiter that he might have a comfortable meal prepared for him against he was dressed.

The contrast between the comforts of his present situation, and the terrors and miseries of the preceding evening was a most agreeable one to Harry; and the kind emprossement of the chambermaid and the civility of the waiter, as they hovered about his tea-table, quite warmed his heart, and cheered his spirits.

"What ship was that came down along just now?" asked Jenny of the waiter.

"The Fire Fly, Captain Glassford," replied he; "bound for Jamaica. I should not wonder if we have him up here to supper by and by. He most times gives a supper before he sails."

"Perhaps, my dear," said Jenny, "you never saw any shipping?"

"No," replied Harry, "I never did."

"Well then," said she, "I'm sure it would be worth your while to walk down to the shore. You'll see a sight of it there, and it ar'n't two minutes' walk."

Harry said he thought it would do him good after sleeping so much ; so he took her directions, and set off.

It was really an interesting sight to him, and he stood gazing with wonder and admiration at the forest of masts, and the monstrous hulks, heaving to and fro on the waves ; and thinking he should like to go on board some of them, and be initiated into the mysteries of the interior. One particularly attracted his attention. It was a beautiful vessel, with a fine gilt figure-head that glistened in the beams of the setting sun ; and she was just in the act of lowering her white sails and throwing out her anchor. Harry thought it would be very pleasant to go to sea in such a fine ship ; and wondered whether, if he did not succeed in getting into the army, he might not possibly be more fortunate with the navy.

As soon as she had dropped her anchor, Harry, who continued to watch her motions with the curiosity of a boy to whom such scenes were new, observed them lowering a boat, into which, as soon as it touched the water, leaped several men in white jackets.

"It's the Captain's gig," observed some of the bystanders. "He's coming ashore."

The long, narrow boat vaulted over the waves, impelled by the regular strokes of the oarsmen, and soon touched the strand; and a handsome looking, middle aged man, with rather a stern expression of countenance, stepped out.

"Shall we lay-to, Sir?" asked the steersman touching his hat. "No," replied the Captain, "I shall sleep ashore;" and he walked quickly away; whilst Harry still stood watching the progress of the graceful boat on her return to the ship.

After he had strolled through the principal parts of the town, when he at length returned to the inn he found the house in some bustle. Captain Glassford had arrived, and, as the waiter expected, had ordered supper for himself and friends. Harry thought he should be as well out of the way; and as he felt that, in spite of his day's rest, sleep was still in arrears to him, he went to bed.

It was late when he descended to the coffee-room the next morning, where the waiter had placed his breakfast. He had tied up his little bundle before he came down, intending to start for London without further delay; and with a feeling of regret he sat down to eat his last meal where he had met so much civility and good treatment.

Whilst he was waiting for his tea and toast, a gentleman who had been seated in one of the recesses with a newspaper in his hand, arose, and walked over to the hearth where Harry was standing warming himself by a little fire that had been just put in the grate on account of the frostiness of the morning.

"A bit of fire is not unacceptable," observed the stranger, whom Harry recognised as the Captain of the vessel he had seen dropping her anchor on the preceding evening, and who had afterwards come ashore in his gig.

Harry said it was very cool; but he thought it must be colder in a ship; and he asked if there were fires on board; and made some other inquiries with respect to the internal arrangements of a vessel; so that from one thing to another they fell into conversation, and the Captain proposed that they should eat their breakfast at the same table; an offer which Harry gladly accepted, and by which he was much a gainer; for the Captain ordered a luxuriant breakfast, of which he urged his young companion freely to partake, and for which he would not permit him to pay any share of the expense.

"If you never saw the interior of a ship,"

said the Captain, "suppose you go on board with me this afternoon. The novelty will amuse you for some hours; and my gig shall put you ashore at night. I shall sleep on board myself, as I intend sailing with the morning's tide."

Harry hesitated a little, for he thought he ought not to lose more time; besides that his funds were daily reducing, and he was dreadfully afraid of their being exhausted before his objects in London were accomplished. Still the temptation was great—"besides," thought he, "I should like to see the inside of a ship, and how people live in one; for who knows but I myself may be a sailor some day?" so he finally resolved to defer his journey another day, and accept of Captain Glassford's invitation.

"If you'll meet me at four o'clock," said the Captain, "where you say you saw me come ashore last night, I'll take you off in my gig."

When the breakfast was ended the Captain went out; and Harry, who found the shipping the most attractive object, walked down to the strand and seated himself on the edge of a boat, where he could be amused with watching the proceedings in the various vessels that were anchored near the shore. The Fire Fly lay farther out than some of the others, but yet

not so far but he could see the crew moving about, apparently washing and cleaning the decks. One man he observed come to the side, shake a white cloth over several times ; and once or twice he left it hanging there for some minutes as if to dry.

The morning passed quickly enough in a scene so new, and after returning to the inn to take some dinner, Harry repaired again to the strand to keep his appointment.

Punctual as the hour the Captain appeared, and the gig was as punctually there to meet him ; and, rapidly borne over the waves by the light boat, a few minutes saw Harry on board the Fire Fly.

Having first taken him to his own cabin, and shown him every thing there, Captain Glassford called one of the officers and committed him to his care.

"You'll find plenty to amuse you," he said, "for two or three hours. I've got some letters to write ; but when tea's ready I shall send to you."

There was amusement enough, and Harry found so many questions to ask, and the young man, whom Captain Glassford had selected for his intelligence, was so willing to give informa-

tion, that the afternoon passed rapidly away. At seven o'clock he was invited to tea with the Captain, who treated him with great kindness, and showed him his arms, and a variety of curiosities ; amongst others a small red snake preserved in spirits.

"It's a beautiful creature," said Harry ; " is it venomous ?"

"Deadly," replied the Captain. " It was nearly the cause of my death, and that's why I keep it."

" Did it bite you ?" inquired Harry.

" No," said the Captain, " it did not, or I shouldn't be here to show it to you. But it was intended to do so ; and I had a very narrow escape."

Harry felt considerable curiosity to hear how the serpent could have been designed to bite the Captain ; but he forbore to ask farther questions, lest he should appear impertinent ; and between eight and nine o'clock he was put ashore.

It was not without a good deal of regret that he parted with his new friend. He was in a situation that naturally inclined him to cling with eagerness to any one that showed him kindness. Poor fellow, he was so much in need

of friends. "I've none," he thought, "that can help me. Fanny's but a slave herself ; and Jeremy, and Dobbs, and Susan, though they all love me, they can do nothing for me." He half regretted that he had not told his story to Captain Glassford, and asked his advice—"but then," said he, "perhaps he'd have blamed me for running away; every body's ready to think a boy that runs away is in the wrong; and perhaps he mightn't believe Gaveston's as bad as he is—so it may be better I held my tongue."

He watched the gig on its return till he saw it heaved upon the deck ; and then bidding farewell to the Fire Fly, and its Captain, he walked into the town. In passing the corner of a street he observed several people standing round a door, and many others were making their way to the same spot ; so Harry, supposing there was something to be seen, took the same direction.

"What is it ?" he asked, of one of the crowd.

"It's the playhouse," replied the man. "There's the great Mrs. Siddons, from London acting to night."

Harry had read plays, and he had heard of the great Mrs. Siddons, but he had never seen either.

"Can I go in?" said he.

"Certainly," replied the man, "as soon as it's half price, which will be in a few minutes."

Harry inquired the price of admission, and having ascertained that it was a sum within the compass of his means, he resolved to treat himself with so rare a sight; and accordingly pushed forwards with the rest of the aspirants, and succeeded in obtaining a seat in the pit.

Here, for about three hours, he sat wrapt—first entranced by the glorious tragedy, and the glorious actress, and then thrown into fits of uncontrollable laughter by the humours of the farce. The past and the future were alike forgotten—it was the unveiling of a new world, the opening of a mine of pleasures unconceived; and when at a little past midnight Harry found himself in the street, his mind was in such a state of excitement and bewilderment, that he hurried on after the crowd, without knowing or pausing to reflect, whether he was pursuing the right road to "the Crown" or not.

He was, at length, brought to his recollection by finding himself at the water side; and when awakened to a consciousness of the scene before him, he did not regret his mistake. The twinkling stars and the waning crescent of the

pale moon served enough to show the large hulks with their bosoms resting on the now nearly motionless waters; whilst their tall masts looked dim and shadowy in the dreary and uncertain light. All was still and quiet—no sound proceeded from those giants of the deep, nor from the many hundred living beings they contained.

Harry looked for his friend the Fire Fly—she was conspicuous, for she lay rather apart from the others, and, as he fancied, had moved somewhat farther out since he left her.

He now recognised where he was, and when he had gazed sufficiently on the fairy scene before him, he turned in the direction of his lodging, still, however, keeping by the shore, by which for a certain distance he could approach it as well as by the street.

In his course he passed several low public houses, in which he could see and hear the noisy revellers of the night, drinking and smoking within; and occasionally the echo of a boisterous song, or a loud burst of laughter, or the cry of a woman's voice, testified to the coarse nature of their merriment.

He was just on the point of leaving the strand for the street, when as he approached one of

these houses that stood a little remote from the others, he heard the voices of persons in conversation proceeding from an open window; and on looking up, he perceived two men with their heads out, one of whom was holding a glass to his eye.

"There's Bill Jones, by G—!" exclaimed one of the voices at the very instant Harry was passing beneath the window—"all's right! come along!" and they pushed back their seats and disappeared.

"Bill Jones," thought Harry as the name struck on his ear—"Bill Jones," and he looked about, but saw nobody near him. "Bill Jones!" again he repeated, "that was the name those fellows mentioned in the night—they certainly said something about Bill Jones. What was it?" and he tried to recall what he had heard, which partly from the preoccupation of his own fears, and partly because he did not understand their phrases, and had caught but disjointed bits of the dialogue, had not made much impression on him.

"There was something about Bill Jones—and the Pretty Polly—I wonder if this is the Pretty Polly!" and he looked up at the sign that was slung on a pole, but he could not dis-

cern what it was—"and the Captain sleeping on board, and a chest that they were going to steal, I suppose—I hope it wasn't my Captain, by the by," and he turned his head back to look at the Fire Fly—and he discerned something—he was not at first sure, and he strained his eyes to see—yes, there was a glimmering light that appeared to proceed from a lantern held or slung over her side, and by that faint light, on the dark hull of the ship gleamed a white flag.

On the instant, the whole truth flashed upon Harry's mind ; and without pausing to reflect what would be most advisable to do, he turned back and ran with all the speed he could along the strand to where he had parted with the Captain's gig some hours earlier ; but just as he reached the spot, he saw a boat push off with two men in it, whom he could not doubt were the villains upon their desperate expedition.

"Oh, what shall I do?" thought Harry. "If I go to the inn, by the time I've told my story, and got assistance it will be too late. They'll have murdered him before that—who can I apply to ? Perhaps the people in these public houses are all rogues too, and wouldn't help me if they could—but I must try them," and so

saying, he set off towards the nearest house in which he saw there was a light.

The door was open, and in rushing into the passage, Harry ran against a man that was coming out.

"Hallo, my hearty!" cried the man. "What quarter's the wind in now?"

"Oh," cried Harry, seizing the hard hand of the bluff sailor, "will you help me?"

"To be sure I will," replied the man. "What's the row?"

"Can you get a boat?" said Harry. "We can do nothing without a boat."

"What," said the man, "ashore without leave? In plain clothes too? Whew!" and he gave a long whistle, as much as to say, "I see."

"Oh, come along!" cried Harry, pulling him by the hand, "come along, and get the boat, and you shall be paid any thing you like; only make haste!"

"What ship is it?" said the sailor, jerking up his trowsers, and preparing to accompany Harry.

"It's the Fire Fly," replied he. "Where's your boat?"

"What, Captain Glassford?" said the sailor, and he gave another long whistle—"He's a taut hand too. Don't stand no gammon."

"Where's the boat?" reiterated Harry.

"Hauled up here close by," replied the man. "This is her;" and he began pushing the little boat into the water; Harry, in his eagerness, helping with all his might and main. They were soon in it and away.

"Give me an oar," cried Harry. "Perhaps I can help you;—you must row for your life."

But Harry had never used an oar, except on the pond at Oakfield; and the quick eye of the sailor soon detected him.

"Y'ar'n't used to handle an oar, Master," said he. "You pull like a landsman."

Harry was conscious that the man misunderstood the object of his haste, and uncertain of the sort of character he had to deal with, he was afraid to disclose it, lest he should refuse to proceed.

"I never could row," said he, "but never mind that. Pull away as fast as you can;" and still, though his exertions did not advance the boat an inch, he tugged at the oar with all his might and main.

"I wish I knew whether he's an honest man," thought he, as they neared the ship. "He might advise me what to do."

"Avast rowing there! The Captain 'll hear

you, and you'll get a wiggling," said the good-natured tar, taking away the oar that Harry was splashing and dashing the water with to no purpose, and laying it quietly across the thwarts; whilst he himself, as softly as possible, and with a scarcely perceptible motion of his arm, urged the boat forwards.

"Will you help me?" said Harry again, who thought the good-nature of the man towards himself testified in his favour.

"Ar'n't I helping you?" answered the other.

"But will you stand by me?" said Harry; "will you come aboard and help the Captain? There are thieves and murderers aboard, and I'm going to try and save him."

"You!" exclaimed the sailor, amazed, and beginning to think the boy was out of his senses, or had been drinking.

"Yes," replied Harry, "there's no time to explain—only follow me aboard and stand by me—that's all I ask."

"I'll do that," replied the sailor, "with all my heart. But I hear no stir aboard—all's quiet."

"Yes," said Harry, "and the greater the danger the Captain's in, because they'll attack him

in his sleep. But I don't see any thing of the boat the thieves were in, though I saw them push off just before I met you."

"Mayhap she's round o' the larboard side," answered the sailor.

The lantern and flag had also disappeared; and there was not the slightest symptom that any thing unusual was going on aboard the Fire Fly. "Can I be mistaken?" thought Harry—but no; every thing had corresponded so exactly with the conversation he had overheard in the field, that it was scarcely possible he could have misinterpreted the intention of the men.

"Is there a public house called the Pretty Polly, a little way up the strand, in that direction?" inquired he of his companion.

"There is," replied the man, "and a black-guard place it is."

"Then I'm right," said Harry, "for that's the place the thieves named."

"We'd better keep to the starboard," said the sailor, "if you think the rascals are o't'other side. Shall I call somebody to hand us over a rope?" added he as they touched the side of the ship.

"No, no," answered Harry, "only help me up and follow me as quickly as you can."

"I'll only stop to make her fast with an end of a rope I've got here," answered the sailor as he hoisted Harry upon his shoulders, "and be after you in a twinkling."

When Harry set his light foot on the deck, he cast a rapid glance from one end of it to the other. There was but one person to be discerned; and that was a man who was hanging over the larboard side, apparently speaking to a boat below; and whose back consequently being turned, and his attention deeply engaged, he had not been disturbed by the noiseless approach of the newcomers.

Harry only paused to ascertain thus much, and then he darted forward to the companion, and was in the Captain's cabin in an instant.

"Wake!" he cried, throwing himself upon the cot, "wake, and get up, your life's in danger!"

Captain Glassford, a man long inured to péril, was upon his feet in a moment; and in another, his hand was upon his pistols which he always kept loaded.

"Give me one," said Harry, elevated into a hero by excitement and enthusiasm, and elated by the success of his enterprise—"give me one—I can fire."

"What's the matter?" said Captain Glassford, now that being prepared for the peril, whatever it might be, he had time to inquire.

"There are thieves coming to attack you—to steal some chest you've got here, and to murder you," replied Harry. "Their boat's by the side now, and there's a man talking to them."

"You must be mistaken, my dear," said Captain Glassford—"such a thing's not likely."

"Have you a man on board, called Bill Jones?" asked Harry.

"Yes," answered Captain Glassford, "it must be his watch now."

"Then I'm not mistaken," said Harry—"he's a villain too. Hark—listen—" and he lowered his voice—"they're coming now—don't you hear footsteps?"

"There is some one coming," whispered the Captain, and he placed himself opposite the cabin door with a pistol in each hand; whilst Harry with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, raised by his feelings far above the sense of danger, stood fast beside him with another. "Don't fire unless I tell you," said the Captain.

The cabin door was still open, and the shoeless feet softly descending were distinctly heard. The experienced officer, calm and collected, cast a glance at his young ally. "Noble little fellow!" he said to himself, "I was taken by his countenance the first moment I looked at him. Who could have thought—" but the appearance of a head at the door immediately followed by two others, arrested the train of his reflections.

The men, who had expected to effect their object without noise, and to make their escape before the alarm was given, were not provided with fire arms; and were therefore taken aback on perceiving the preparation made for their reception. The foremost stepped back upon the others, and they were about to retreat precipitately up the stairs, in the hope of being over the side and away, before they could be overtaken, when they found their progress arrested by a pair of sturdy arms stretched across their path.

"How, now, my hearties?" said Harry's boatman, for it was he who was the new ally, "whither so fast?"

The alarm was given; the villains were quickly surrounded and disarmed, and Harry

had the satisfaction and the glory of having saved his friend.

"What?" said the Captain, when he approached to examine the men after they were secured, "my old enemies—Tyler and Strickland, by Heavens! Why, rascals, I thought you were both at sea in the Halifax?"

"We swam ashore by night when she was off Scilly," replied Tyler, "and they put to sea afore they missed us."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

A CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT IN THE ASPECT OF  
HARRY'S AFFAIRS.

HOLDING out his hand, "Well, my dear fellow," said Captain Glassford to Harry, when the bustle and confusion had a little subsided, "you've in all probability saved my life; but how you managed the business I cannot possibly imagine. How did you find out the villains' designs? And how did you contrive to arrive here in the very nick of time?"

"I heard them planning it all in a field last night," replied Harry; "but I didn't understand then very well what they meant to do; nor who it was they were going to rob; nor where the attack was to be made; and when I got here, I was so tired and worn out, that I went to bed and thought no more about it,

except that it was lucky they didn't see me, as they would perhaps have robbed me, too. And I never should have made out exactly what they meant, if it hadn't been for the mention of Bill Jones, and the white flag;" and then Harry narrated to the Captain the conversation he had overheard in the field, the accident that had conducted him to the strand at so late an hour, and all that had followed.

"They are great villains," said Captain Glassford, after he had warmly expressed his acknowledgments to his young preserver; "and this is not the first attempt they have made against my life. This time you've saved me; on the last occasion I owed my preservation to a worthy old friend of mine, to whom I introduced you last night."

"The officer that drank tea with us?" inquired Harry.

"No," replied the Captain; "honest old Tycho?"

"What, the old grey terrier?" exclaimed Harry.

"His very self, I assure you," said Captain Glassford; "and as you must stay on board with me to-night, we'll have some supper and a glass of negus, and I'll tell you the story."

Harry made no objections to so agreeable a proposal; and his boatman, after receiving an ample reward for his services, was directed to call at the Crown, and inform them that their young lodger was safely disposed of for the night—"for I'm sure that good-natured chamber-maid would be uneasy about me."

"I believe she would," replied Captain Glassford, "for, to tell you the truth, it was Jenny herself that was the original cause of our acquaintance. I called her in when I was dressing yesterday morning, to sew on a button for me; and happening by way of saying something to ask her who was in the house, she took occasion to name you, and to expatiate on the good qualities she had discovered in you. So that when you came into the coffee-room afterwards, I laid down my paper to take a look at Jenny's favourite."

The Captain did not add what Jenny had done, "that she thought the poor little fellow was in some trouble; and that it would be a great kindness in any gentleman to take a little notice of him."

"So you see," continued he, as they sat down to supper

"What great effects from trifling causes spring."

“And here’s my friend Tycho, come to listen to his own exploits. It was on my last voyage to Jamaica that those two villains, Tyler and Strickland, were on board my ship. They came to us with very bad characters; but men were scarce, and we were ordered to sea in a hurry, so that I’d no time to be nice, but was obliged to take such as I could get. I gave directions that a strict eye should be kept upon them, and though they were very troublesome, the rest of the crew being decent, well behaved men, they couldn’t do much mischief during the voyage.

“When we’re in port, it’s usual to let the men go ashore by turns; but I was very unwilling to let these fellows out of the ship, fearing they’d get into some mischief. However, they begged hard; and though I’d an ill opinion of them, they hadn’t done any thing bad enough to justify a refusal; so I gave them leave.

“It was a standing rule that no man should be absent from the ship after eight o’clock without a special permission; by which means I kept a taut hand over those I couldn’t depend upon, although I never refused reasonable liberty to the steady men.

“The morning after these fellows had had their leave, however, when the second lieutenant came ashore to make his report, he informed me that nothing had been seen of Tyler and Strickland since they left the ship the preceding morning. Upon which I ordered that they should be sought for, and carried aboard directly ; and that if they gave any trouble they should be put in irons. The search, however, was vain ; we couldn’t make out what was become of them.

“I think it was on the third morning of their absence, that we learned a gentleman’s house in the interior had been broken into in the night, and robbed of some valuables ; and I confess I no sooner heard of it, than I suspected my villains had a hand in the business ; and I dispatched some of the crew that I could depend upon to look for them in that direction.

Presently afterwards, however, there came tidings from the ship that Tyler and Strickland were returned. Their story was, that they had wandered far away into the woods to see the country ; and that there, Strickland being thirsty had eaten of some fruit or berries he had plucked, which had produced the most violent indispo-

sition ; and that Tyler thinking every moment was to be his last, had been afraid to leave him. To prove the truth of their story they produced some specimens of the fruit of a very pernicious shrub ; and certainly, Strickland had every appearance of having been extremely ill.

“Nevertheless I doubted their story. I suspected that Strickland had eaten the fruit for the express purpose of accounting for their absence. I knew they’d been in the Island before ; and the chances were, that they were acquainted with the shrub ; and I ordered that they should be searched, and be kept close to the ship during the remainder of our stay. Nothing, however, was found upon them ; and having no proof that they were guilty, I could not punish them any further.

“After this, they made repeated applications for a day’s liberty on shore, which was always denied them ; till just before we were about to sail, when they became so urgent, that as they had been conducting themselves better for some time, I yielded to their entreaties, but on the condition that they should not go together, but be each coupled with one of the steadiest of the crew.

‘This arrangement evidently annoyed them ; and they pleaded hard to go together ; promis-

ing faithfully to return before eight o'clock, under pain of any punishment I chose to inflict ; and representing that it was not pleasant to go ashore with those I had appointed, who were not on friendly terms with them.

"But I was inexorable ; suspecting that they had no good motive for their urgency ; and, at all events, satisfied that I had no right to let loose such a couple of rascals on the island.

"Strickland went first ; and we learned from the man who had accompanied him, that he had made several attempts to give him the slip, and get away into the woods, but that he was too sharp for him.

"It was only a couple of days before we sailed that Tyler had his liberty under the same restrictions ; and the companion that had been allotted to him described his attempts at evasion to have been as evident as those of his friend. He even offered a considerable bribe to the man to let him off for a couple of hours, promising faithfully to return at the expiration of the time ; but all his efforts and persuasions were unsuccessful, and he was brought back boiling with rage and malignity. In short, it was evident to every body that they had been prevented from accomplishing some object or

another, that they'd set their hearts upon, and that they were both grievously disappointed.

"On the following day I came on board myself, and a few hours afterwards we put to sea; and as there was no further possibility of the two fellows getting away, the vigilance with which their motions had been observed was somewhat relaxed.

"I had, and have still, a custom of going upon deck of a morning in my dressing gown and slippers to look at the weather, and returning to my cabin afterwards to finish my toilet.

"On the morning in question, the first after we had put to sea, when I came below, after my visit to the deck, I found old Tycho lying in the cabin with his fore paws stretched out, and his eyes intently fixed on my boots, which my servant had placed ready for me to put on.

"I patted and spoke to him as I usually did; and asked him to what I was indebted for the honour of such an early visit, for Tycho rarely made his appearance below till breakfast time. He licked my hand, but still his attention appeared more engaged by the boots than by me. However, I thought nothing about it; and presently afterwards I took up one of the boots and drew it on; a proceeding to which

Tycho made no manner of objection. But when I stretched out my hand for the other, he barked, and very significantly expressed his disapprobation, and the more I persisted, the more violent became his opposition.

“I could not imagine what the dog meant ; and being rather amused at what I considered his eccentricity, I jested with it for some time ; stretching out my hand towards the boot, and then drawing it back, as if in submission to his protestations ; till, at length, having no more time to waste, I resolutely took hold of the boot and prepared to put my foot into it.

“But Tycho was resolved I should do no such thing ; and he renewed his opposition with so much energy and determination, that, at last, it grew to a perfect scuffle between him and me which should have the boot ; he pulling it one way, and I the other, really disabled from exerting a sufficient degree of force to vanquish him, from the violent fits of laughter he threw me into.

“But fortunately for me, just as I was about to give him a kick and put an end to the nonsense, the battle was decided in favour of Tycho. By a sudden jerk, he wrenched the boot from my hand, and flung it to the other

side of the cabin; and with the impetus of its fall, out flew that beautiful little red snake you so much admired last night.

"Poor fellow! his instinct, or reason, or whatever faculty it may be that Providence has endowed him with, had saved my life."

"But how did the snake get there?" asked Harry. "Are there snakes on board a ship?"

"Not unless they be brought there," replied the Captain; "and from subsequent investigation we had every reason to believe that Tyler had contrived to procure the reptile from a negro the day before when he was on shore, brought it on board in a bottle, and conveyed it into my boot whilst I was upon deck.

"His motive was revenge for the severity I had shown him and Strickland; and the disappointment I had inflicted by not letting them go ashore alone. For shortly afterwards, the jewels that had been stolen on the occasion of the robbery I mentioned, were found concealed in the woods; and though it could not be proved, there is little doubt but that they had committed it, and had hidden their plunder, intending to seize some favourable opportunity of securing it when their persons were not likely to be searched. And now, my dear

fellow," said the Captain, when he had finished his narrative, "we must think of going to bed; and to-morrow, for I must remain here another day to make arrangements about those rascals, we will, if you'll give me leave, have a little conversation about your affairs; and you must explain to me by what strange chance you happened to be concealed under a hedge in the middle of the night—certainly, about the last place I should expect to find you in."

Harry, who had now good reason to feel that he had made a friend, declared his readiness to relate all his adventures; and accordingly the next morning at breakfast, he communicated to Captain Glassford, without reserve, the whole history of his birth, parentage and education; together with his subsequent misfortunes, and disappointments in consequence of his uncle's death, and Fanny's marriage; and concluded by disclosing the hopes and views with which he had fled from Oakfield, and had directed his steps to London.

"My dear child," said Captain Glassford, when Harry had finished his story, "all that's moonshine in the water."

"What is?" asked Harry.

"Your hopes of getting a commission in the way you propose," replied the Captain.

"Is it?" said Harry with a face of dismay.

"I fear so," replied Captain Glassford; "and as for your entering the ranks with the view of promotion, it mustn't be thought of. You little know the sort of life and company you would be subject to—at your age it would be perdition."

"Could I get into the navy, then?" asked Harry.

"I could very likely get you appointed to my own ship as a midshipman," answered the Captain, "but the misfortune is, that I have no interest; and without some very favourable chance, you might remain a midshipman all your life, and die a beggar at last. But are you entirely bent on the army or navy? Couldn't you be satisfied with some other mode of life?"

"I should have liked the army," answered Harry, "because papa was in it; but I could be happy in any profession that was fit for a gentleman."

"Then I think I can do better for you," returned the Captain, "than in getting you into either the land or sea service, where I have no means of pushing you on. You must stay with me for the present, and consider my ship your home. We can talk the matter over at

our leisure; and I'll write to my brother on the subject. Does that proposal suit you?"

"Oh yes, Sir," replied the much contented Harry, "I'm very much obliged indeed."

"Then the thing's settled," returned the Captain. "And now, my dear fellow, you'd better go ashore with me. You must be provided with a few little matters that we can easily get here; and you must go and take leave of your friend Jenny at the Crown, to whom I think we both owe our thanks, and something more. We shall return on board to sleep; and sail to-morrow if possible."

The honest Jenny was liberally rewarded; Harry furnished with every thing he required; and relieved from all his cares, grateful and happy, he sailed with Captain Glassford for Jamaica.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

SUSAN FINDS ANOTHER SITUATION; AND MEETS WITH AN  
OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

As it formed part of Mr. and Mrs. Wetherall's plan of economy to give up their house, and resume their former mode of living in lodgings, without a servant of their own, until they were free from the embarrassments they had incurred, it became necessary for Susan to look out for another situation.

This she found in the family of a Mrs. Aytoun, whose husband, being engaged as foreign traveller for some great mercantile house, was frequently absent for several months at a time. They had a comfortable small house in one of the streets leading from the Strand down to the water; keeping two female servants; one of whom attended to the cooking

department, and cleaned the lower part of the house; whilst the other, who acted as housemaid, had charge of the upper rooms, and was required to wait at table. These last were the duties that devolved upon Susan. Without being affluent, Mr. Aytoun's salary was sufficient to enable them to live respectably; and the little establishment was altogether kept on a very comfortable footing.

The marriage, also, seemed a fortunate one. It had been a union of affection formed about a year before Susan entered on her situation; and the husband and wife appeared very well calculated to make each other happy. Mrs. Aytoun was a pretty, cheerful, animated young woman, who had just entered her one and twentieth year; fond of dress, and fond of company; neither of which tastes, however, she allowed herself to indulge to any criminal extent. She was, indeed, much too fond of her husband to stand in need of any constant succession of other people to divert her; and if she were occasionally guilty of any little extravagance for her toilet, it was prompted much more by a desire to please him than to be admired by the world. And Susan thought him well worthy of the pains

she took. He was both handsome and agreeable ; his age, perhaps, thirty, and his tastes very much in accordance with his wife's, to whom he also seemed passionately attached. But it was impossible to be long in his company without perceiving that he had one foible; and that was a too sensitive pride, and an over susceptibility as to what the world would say on all subjects connected with himself and his family. Many a time when Susan was waiting at table, she heard his wife jesting upon this weakness ; the existence of which, silly as he admitted it to be, he never denied.

"I cannot help it, Alicia," he said one day ; "I know it's a folly, since it is utterly impossible to prevent the world saying a great many things that are not true ; but to fancy people are whispering or talking about us, or that we form a subject for the gossip of the neighbourhood, would make me miserable ; perfectly wretched."

"What would you do if you'd a wife like poor Mr. Morland, I wonder," said Alicia, "who thumps her servants every now and then, and gives them black eyes?"

"Oh heavens, don't mention it!" cried Mr. Aytoun.

“Or Mrs. Parsons, that they say drinks gin, and very near set the house on fire the other night, when she was in a state of intoxication. Or Mrs. Bloxham, that the baker asserts alters his figures in her book that she may cheat him out of a loaf or two a week?”

“I’ll tell you what I should do, Alicia,” he answered. “I should blow my brains out. However, I don’t think,” he added, laughing, “you’ll ever put me to so severe a trial. But at the same time, my love, I cannot forbear, now that I am going to leave you for a few months, warning you to be very careful. Your situation is peculiar, Alicia. Young, gay, well dressed, and I dare say you’ll excuse me for adding, pretty, you are left a great part of your time without protection; and, therefore, necessarily exposed to much more close observation than you would be if I were always with you. You’ll find people will be ready to take hold of the slightest thing—trifles that would never be observed in another woman.”

“But you know I never flirt with any body, Arthur,” replied his wife. “Who could they connect my name with? Besides, you know my opinion of married women who flirt. I

think a woman who risks her own reputation and her husband's respectability for the indulgence of her vanity, is virtually much more criminal than the unfortunate creature who has been led astray by a passion she could not control. Besides, if a woman chooses to behave as if she were guilty, who's to tell whether she is or not? She cannot expect the world will take the trouble of penetrating the truth; and she may be well assured, that a portion of it, at least, will put the worst construction on what they see. No, no, my dear Arthur, you need never fear me. I love and revere my husband a great deal too much to peril our happiness and respectability at such foolish play as that. Besides, there, I confess," she added, laughing, "I should be as susceptible as you are, I couldn't bear to be pointed out wherever I went as Mrs. So and So, that has an affair with Mr. So and So."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed her husband; "but I merely mean to put you on your guard. I know very well you would not flirt, but I would avoid every thing that was the least particular—many things you might do, for example when I am here—I'd dress more plainly too, if I were you."

"That advice I shall have no difficulty in following," replied Alicia, affectionately. "The motive for dressing will be wanting."

Shortly after this, Mr. Aytoun set out on an expedition which engaged him about three months; and nothing could exceed the cautious conduct of his wife during his absence. Other journeys ensued at intervals; but the time he passed at home was always a period of unalloyed happiness.

In this manner three years had elapsed since Susan entered on her situation without any occurrence worth recording, when she learned that Mr. Aytoun was about to start on an expedition that would probably occasion an absence of ten or twelve months.

The parting was a great grief to the young couple, and the last evening they spent together Alicia shed showers of tears. "I used to think two or three months' absence a great hardship," she said, "but this is dreadful. I don't know how I shall ever get through it."

"Time will fly," said her husband, "faster than you imagine."

"Aye, with you," she replied, "who will be always moving, and have plenty of amusement and occupation. But think how different it will be with me, living here alone."

"But you need not always be alone, my love," answered Mr. Aytoun. "You have plenty of acquaintance, and need not want society. At the same time I would not, under present circumstances, engage in too much of it," he added, "or the world will be apt to say that you are gayer when I'm away than when I'm here;" and upon this ensued several other cautions of the like nature; in short, with slight variations, a repetition of the conversation we have above detailed.

Mr. Aytoun had been gone but a very short time when his wife found herself *enceinte*; a discovery most gratifying, for they had both ardently desired to become parents. "I'll not tell Arthur yet though," she said to herself, "for fear there should be a disappointment. I declare, I've a mind not to tell him at all, but to keep it for a surprise to welcome him home"—and she continued to write letter after letter without giving the slightest hint of the important secret. Neither did she communicate it to her acquaintance; she had no female connexions, nor no very confidential friend. Her home had been in the country, where Mr. Aytoun had first met with her; she settled amongst strangers, and the society they had, had been chiefly formed since their marriage.

Of course, there were great preparations for the expected baby, and many discussions with Susan, who was in the secret, about caps, frocks, pinafores, and so forth.

About four months of Mrs. Aytoun's pregnancy had elapsed, when she called at a shop where she occasionally dealt, to purchase some fine lace, cambric, and other articles ; together with some silk to make a dress for herself. As she did not find it altogether easy to make a selection amongst the multitude of things presented to her notice, nor was quite certain of the quantities required, she at last desired the shopman to send her a choice of the different articles to her house, which were accordingly laid aside for that purpose. This being arranged, she turned to go away ; and as she did so, took up her handkerchief and purse that had been lying on the counter, and was thrusting them into her pocket as she moved towards the door ; but before she reached it, she felt a hand laid on her arm, whilst the man who had been serving her said, " I beg your pardon, Ma'am, but you are not aware that there is a piece of lace attached to your handkerchief."

She looked down, and saw that she had unconsciously taken up a remnant of fine lace, and

that the end of it was hanging from her pocket. A circumstance of this sort is always extremely unpleasant; and it is so difficult to distinguish between accident and design, that shopkeepers are naturally suspicious. However, in this instance the man was civil enough, and said nothing that implied a doubt of her innocence. Nevertheless, Alicia blushed, and looked confused, as most people would do under the like circumstances; especially when she saw the heads of several persons turned to look at her; and she hurried out of the shop with a very uncomfortable feeling, saying to herself, "Heaven be praised Arthur was not with me! I believe he'd have fallen into a fit on the spot."

On the following morning, the things she had desired to look at arrived; but Mrs. Aytoun having a visitor at the moment, requested the man to leave them, and call again by and by. He accordingly went away, and returned in about a couple of hours. She then selected what she chose, he measured and cut off the quantities required, and carried away the remainder.

About an hour had elapsed, and she was sitting in her parlour inspecting her purchases, which were spread out on the table, when there

came a loud ringing at the bell, and presently Susan ushered in Mr. Green, who desired to see her immediately.

"I am sorry, Ma'am," said he, in rather an insolent tone, "to be obliged to trouble you; but there is a whole piece of lace missing from the parcel I sent here, besides some yards of another. The silk returned, also, is short of the measure it ought to be, by several yards."

"Good heavens, Sir!" said Alicia, quite alarmed, "I'm very sorry; but your man himself measured and cut off what I kept."

"No doubt, Ma'am," replied Mr. Green; "I'm aware of that. But the goods were left here some time by your desire; and the thing looks very awkward."

"You don't intend to imply that I have your lace!" exclaimed Alicia, indignantly.

"I don't know who else can have it," returned Mr. Green; "unless you have any reason to suspect your servants."

"No," replied Mrs. Aytoun, "I do not suspect my servants; and indeed I am quite sure they were neither of them in the room whilst your goods were here."

"I'm very sorry to do any thing so unpleasant, Ma'am," said Mr. Green, "but you

must permit this gentleman to search your person ;” and upon that he called in an officer that he had brought with him, and who was waiting in the passage. Alicia’s horror and indignation may be conceived. She rang the bell furiously for Susan, who suspecting nothing of what was going on, had returned to the kitchen after showing in Mr. Green.

“ Susan !” she exclaimed, bursting into tears, “ this man accuses me of having kept back some of his goods, and insists on having me searched.”

“ Lord, Sir !” cried Susan, almost as much shocked as Alicia, “ I’m sure my mistress wouldn’t keep your things. How can you think such a thing ?”

“ Unfortunately,” replied Mr. Green, “ this sort of thing happens too often. I’m sure three hundred a year wouldn’t cover my losses by the dishonesty of the ladies who frequent my shop ; and I’m determined to pursue the thing with rigour that it may be a warning to others. So if you please, Ma’am, searched you must be.” And accordingly the officer proceeded to fulfil the unpleasant duty.

Nothing however was found upon Alicia ; nor in the room, every part of which they

examined. They next proceeded to search the other parts of the house, drawers, servants' boxes and every thing; but with equal ill success.

Nevertheless, Mr. Green still affirmed that the goods had been abstracted by somebody in that house; that he wouldn't mind taking his oath of it in any court of justice in Europe; and he insisted that Mrs. Aytoun should accompany him and the officer to a magistrate.

"I may never recover my goods," said he, "for I know how easy it is to conceal these sort of articles, or get them conveyed out of the house—I don't recover one time in ten; but as I said before, I'm determined to pursue this business—I'll follow it up, I'm resolved, just to let ladies see these things can't be done with impunity."

"I'll pay you the price of the things, Mr. Green," said Alicia. "Heaven knows I haven't got them, nor do I know any thing of them; but I'd pay for them twenty times over rather than submit to this degradation."

"I dare say you would, Ma'am," returned Mr. Green, "but that wouldn't answer my purpose. I once did let a lady off in that

manner ; but though I did it really out of good-nature, because she cried, and screamed, and went into hystericks, and declared she'd make away with herself, and so forth ; what did she do afterwards, when she found the danger was over, but spread a report that I had frightened her into paying for things she never had, by accusing her of purloining them.—No, no ; it won't do—it's a magistrate's business, and to a magistrate we must go.—I suppose you'd prefer having a coach to walking ? If so, I'll run myself and get one."

"Of course, if I'm to go it must be in a coach," replied the terrified Alicia, sinking into a chair, and giving way to a fresh burst of tears.

"I'll be back with one in a moment," said Mr. Green, "you'll stay here, Jackson," added he, nodding to the officer as he went out.

"Never fear me, Mr. Green," replied Jackson, with a significant look.

"Was there ever any thing so dreadful ?" exclaimed Mrs. Aytoun to Susan, who stood crying by the door. "What am I to do ?"

"I was thinking if I were to run for some of the neighbours, Ma'am," said Susan. "Sure Mr. Green can't have a right to treat a lady in this way."

"Mr. Green's o' the right side o' the law," said Mr. Jackson. "You may depend upon that. There's ne'er a man knows better what he's about than Mr. Green do."

"What do you think of my running to see if Mr. Morland or Mr. Parsons are at home, Ma'am?" said Susan, "and just begging them to step in?"

"Oh no, no," said Alicia, "that would only be making the thing public. It would be all over the town before night. If I must go, the more quietly it's done the better."

"I'd better go with you I think, Ma'am," said Susan.

"Do, Susan," said Mrs. Aytoun; "and I'll go up stairs and put on my bonnet at once, that the coach mayn't be kept at the door;" and she rose to leave the room.

"You must give me leave to go out with you, Ma'am," said Jackson following her—"I hope you'll excuse me; but in these here cases, my orders are never to lose sight of a person we've got in custody."

Sobbing as if her heart would break, poor Alicia resumed her seat, and bade Susan fetch down her bonnet and shawl; and at the same time put on her own; and by the time they

were ready, Mr. Green arrived with the coach, and handing them both into it, he stepped in after them, telling the shopman who was in waiting at the door to run forward and meet them at the office; whilst Mr. Jackson mounted the box, and desired the coachman to drive to Bow Street.

As Mrs. Aytoun was utterly ignorant of the ways of a police office, and had no one with her to claim the little indulgences and exceptions that are usually granted to the feelings of people moving in a respectable station of life, she was at once shown into the public room, where the Magistrate was sitting, receiving the deposition of a gentleman, who was accusing two women of ill character, of having, on the previous evening, purloined his watch and purse.

There were many other people in the office—pickpockets, street-walkers, chimney-sweepers, coal-heavers, dust-men, receivers of stolen goods, and others of the dregs of society, amongst whom Alicia and Susan were introduced.

“You had better come over here,” said Jackson, making a way for them through this mass of vice and corruption, to the other side,

where there was a bench ; “ for it’s like enough you’ll have a pretty time to wait. There’s a good many to have their turn afore you.” So the two abashed women took their seat, with Mr. Green beside them ; Alicia with her veil drawn close over her face, and her pocket handkerchief to her eyes ; whilst Mr. Jackson drew himself up in an easy position, with his back against the wall, in order that he might listen in perfect luxury to what was as interesting to him as a new tragedy to an amateur.

The two women, pretty looking young creatures, who seemed to have been designed by nature for better things, declared that the watch and purse found upon them, (one having been found possessed of the watch and the other of the purse,) were their own ; and had been given to them by a gentleman, who they admitted was not quite sober, in the early part of the evening. Shortly afterwards, they said, they met their present accuser, who accompanied them to an oyster shop ; where they had imprudently shown him the presents they had received. He had examined them very curiously ; opened the watch to look at the maker’s name, and counted the money in the purse, before he

returned them. After which they all came out together, and walked arm in arm for some time, till he saw an opportunity of giving them into custody, upon which he had, to their great astonishment, accused them of robbing him.

The gentleman, who was a foreigner, swore on the contrary, that the things were his own. He said he had arrived in town in the morning, and having dined with some friends, had taken a little too much wine ; and on his way home, had fallen in with the prisoners, who had persuaded him to accompany them to the oyster shop. That there, under pretence of romping, they had examined his pockets, and taken out the watch and purse, which after inspecting, they returned ; he having given them a guinea each out of it ; and that afterwards, whilst walking beside him in the street, he had felt them picking his pockets, but had forbore to speak till he saw an opportunity of giving them into custody, lest they should run off, and he lose his property. He concluded by saying, that there was a gentleman present who could testify that the watch and purse belonged to him, and that he had seen them in his possession a few hours before. This witness was then called forward, and swore positively to the truth of what his friend had asserted.

During the progress of their examination, Susan occasionally listened to the evidence, and at other times devoted her attention to her distressed mistress; but the affair being brought to a conclusion, and decided by the magistrate in favour of the accuser, there was a general move, and falling back of the crowd, in order to make way for the party to come out.

"By Jingo," she heard Jackson exclaim, suddenly, "I'm blow'd if that 'ere ar'n't Nosey! I ha'n't seen him this four or five year, I b'lieve I thought he wer' dropt off the hooks."

Her attention attracted by Jackson's exclamation, Susan turned to look at the retreating party, whose yet uncovered heads just appeared above the crowd. The first was a handsome dark man, with a quantity of black hair, mingled with grey, on his head and face, who had perhaps seen forty years. The second, apparently about the same age, was of a lighter complexion; the crown of his head was quite bald; and his profile being turned to Susan, the cause of the nickname by which Jackson had designated him, appeared in prominent relief. It was a nose, once seen, not to be easily forgotten; the bridge had evidently been broken, either by a blow or an accident, and a

projection which gave a singular expression to the feature had been the consequence. Susan felt she could have sworn to having seen that nose before, and she started to her feet under the influence of her emotion.

"Sit still, sit still, my dear," said Jackson, patting her on the shoulder, "it ar'n't your turn yet by a good many," and as the strangers disappeared through the door, Susan sank again into her seat.

"No," said Jackson, continuing the conversation that Susan's movement had interrupted, "No, I don't know t'other swell; he can't ha' been long upon town—newly imported, I suppose—"

"Genuine," interrupted his companion with a knowing leer.

"Be sure o'that," returned Jackson. "As for that 'ere Nosey, his perboscis, as some on 'em calls it, was famillar enough on the turf and the ring; and he was well enough known at all the hells about the West End—but he disappeared all on a sudden. I suppose by the pal he's got, he's been across the water."

"Pray, Sir," said Susan, "do you know the name of the gentleman you're talking of?"

"I never heard him called by no name but Nosey, my dear," answered Jackson, "and

that was the best name to know him by, if ever we wanted him, 'cause one saw it in his face. A chap may shift his name as easy as his shirt, but he couldn't get rid of his nose, no how, you know."

"I dare say, after all, the girl's story was true," remarked the other man.

"You may take your davy o' that," replied Jackson. "Them there ar'n't the flats that gets their pockets picked. I'd defy the cleverest hand on the town to get any thing out on 'em."

Several other cases followed and were disposed of; during which time Susan sat wrapt in her own meditations, and unconscious of every thing around her; even her mistress's troubles were, for the moment, effaced from her memory by the flood of vivid recollections and absorbing feelings that the sight of that face had conjured up. Her mind had always been impressed with the notion that the visit of the stranger, whom she now felt certain she recognised as Nosey, made at the back door of Oakfield House two nights preceding Mr. Wentworth's death, was some how or another connected with that catastrophe. Many a time in the silence of night, or of an evening, when her work being done, she was seated in her

clean cap and apron, quietly by her kitchen fire, did the circumstances of those eventful days pass in review before her. Especially, her dream—that strange and significant dream, which even then appeared to her more like a vision than the unstrung bubbles that usually occupy the brain of a restless sleeper; and which now, followed up as it had been by such singular coincidences, was daily, more and more, assuming in her mind, form, substance, and reality. But these speculations always terminated in the depressing sense of her own helplessness, and a thorough conviction of the impossibility of persuading any body else to give credit, or attach any importance, to circumstances which had so much weight with her. “No,” she would say as she wiped her eyes with the corner of her apron, at the conclusion of her cogitations, “no, I can do nothing—nothing in the world. I should only be stirring up enemies for myself without doing a bit of good. If ever poor Andrew is to be justified, it will be through the goodness of God; and I do think he, in his own good time, will bring the truth to light yet.”

These reflections of Susan’s were at length interrupted by Jackson’s saying, “Now Mr. Green; now, ladies, your turn’s next. Please

to step this way," and thrusting aside the staring mob, whose curiosity was excited by the appearance of Mrs. Aytoun and Susan, he made room for them to advance towards the bench.

"What have we got here, Jackson?" inquired the magistrate.

"A case of shop-lifting," returned Jackson, "at least the purloining of goods that were sent home on sight."

Mr. Green was then called upon to tell his story. He averred that he had measured the goods himself, both before they were sent out, and when they returned; and he had been the more particular in doing so, because he was not wholly without his suspicions with respect to the lady in custody.

At this avowal the unfortunate Alicia raised her head and looked at him with unfeigned astonishment.

"I don't mean to say," continued Mr. Green, in answer to the surprise he saw depicted in her countenance, "I don't mean to say that it's a thing I could swear to as having been done intentionally; but this I must say, that it had a very suspicious look about it; and that many a one has been brought up to this office upon quite as little a matter; though at the time

we passed it over, as we make it a rule not to be too hasty in these cases." He then mentioned that Mrs. Aytoun, on the preceding day, had been detected in the act of putting a piece of lace in her pocket that was wrapped up and partly concealed in her handkerchief; and it may be imagined that this unlucky circumstance had considerable influence on the minds of the audience, and seriously aggravated the peril of her position.

The shopman next testified to his having received the goods from Mr. Green, after seeing them measured, and the precise quantities noted down; that he had himself delivered them to Mrs. Aytoun in the parlour, where she was sitting in conversation with a lady—that she requested him, as she was then engaged, to leave them, and call again; that he had accordingly done so; and on returning to the shop with the goods, he had delivered them at once into the hands of Mr. Green himself, who had immediately measured them and found the deficiencies stated.

Mr. Jackson then explained his part in the business; adding, that the search had been ineffectual; but that there had been quite sufficient interval for Mrs. Aytoun to have removed the goods, or transferred them to somebody else; and that therefore their ill

success could not be accounted in her exculpation.

Mr. Green then gave the strongest testimony in favour of the character of the shopman. He was his nephew; a young man of unexceptionable morals and conduct; and he had been selected, in this particular instance, to carry the goods on that very account.

Poor Mrs. Aytoun was then asked what she had to say in her own defence. She raised her head, threw back her veil, clasped her hands, in a beseeching attitude, and answered, "Only that I am innocent! I know nothing of the things said to be missing. I looked over what was sent, and laid aside those I wished to keep—but God is my witness, that till the shopman returned; not a single article had been removed from the table where he left them, nor a single yard of any thing cut off. I am utterly unable to explain or throw any light upon it. I recollect that I went to my bed-room to fetch a yard measure; but no one, in the interval, could have entered the room without my meeting them." She testified freely to the character of her servants, and generously exonerated them from any suspicion.

The evidence against her was certainly

strong, and the unlucky accident of the previous day had made a powerful impression.

"I fear, Madam," said the magistrate, "we must commit you ; unless you can find bail."

Alicia, without answering, hid her face in her handkerchief, and sobbed as if her heart was bursting ; whilst Susan wept with her for sympathy. They had neither of them a very clear idea of what was required ; but whatever it was, it was certain to lead to an exposure amongst her friends and acquaintance ; besides that she felt she had scarcely that degree of intimacy or confidence with any one of them, to select him on such an emergency.

"If the lady will permit me the honour of doing her this little service," said a gentleman, taking off his hat, and approaching her, respectfully, "it will give me great pleasure ; and relieve her from the annoyance of further detention. You will not object to my bail, I presume," added he, turning with a smile to the magistrate, whose acquaintance he appeared to be, and to whom he had occasionally addressed a few words during the course of the previous examination.

"Oh certainly not—certainly not," replied his worship, with a sly and significant look at his friend. "If it's agreeable to the lady."

Alicia had no time for reflection ; all she saw was the advantage of immediate release, and the means of avoiding an application to any of her acquaintance—she thanked the stranger, and accepted his offer.

A few minutes sufficed to conclude the business, and set her free. Mr. Green and the shopman departed ; whilst her new found friend, who was a handsome, well dressed, elegant looking man, of about forty, with very polished manners, though with an air *un peu avantageux*, gallantly advanced to offer her his arm, and conducted her to her coach which was still waiting. Having placed her in it, he stepped in after her, saying, he could not think of permitting her to return alone in her present state of agitation and distress ; and when they reached her door, after handing her out with the same deferential courtesy, he gallantly lifted his hat from his head, as she ascended the steps ; and took his leave, with the announcement, that he should do himself the honour of calling, on the following day, to inquire after her health.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

WHICH EXHIBITS A SPECIMEN OF THE SYMPATHY OF  
FRIENDS, AND THE INCONVENIENCE OF OBLIGATIONS.

"THAT of all the people in the world, this misfortune should have fallen on me!" exclaimed Mrs. Aytoun, as in an agony of tears she flung herself on her own sofa! "If Arthur hears of it I'm undone—not that he'll believe me guilty—but the disgrace will break his heart. And he must hear of it, if this dreadful man continues his accusation. Heavens and earth!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "how cruel it is that an innocent woman should be plunged into all this wretchedness, and perhaps the whole happiness of her life destroyed, by an accident that no caution could have foreseen or avoided."

The evening that followed was a wretched one for Alicia. The faithful Susan, whose sym-

pathy and commiseration was all the consolation she had, spent the greater part of it by her side, offering her humble tribute of advice, and aiding her mistress in suggesting and canvassing all the possible accidents that could have occasioned the deficiency of the goods; or the means, practicable or impracticable, of eliciting the truth, and vindicating her reputation.

Great as her misfortune appeared whilst she was discussing it in her parlour with Susan, the aspect it assumed when she re-considered it in the silence and solitude of her chamber, was ten times more terrific. Hour after hour the weary clock chimed on, whilst she lay tossing on that couch, till now so peaceful and so blest, in the restless fever of fear, anxiety, and mortification; weeping over the past, wondering at the present, and trembling at the future; till towards morning, imperfect slumbers, interrupted by sudden starts and dreadful awakenings, varied the incidents of the miserable night.

Though unable to sleep, she was yet unwilling to rise, for daylight brought no pleasure to her; and it was near twelve o'clock before she descended to her parlour. She had not been seated there many minutes, and her untasted breakfast was yet beside her, when Susan hastily entered the room, saying, she had just

seen Mrs. Morland and Mrs. Bloxham coming down the street apparently with the intention of calling, and begging to know whether they were to be let in. Mrs. Aytoun first said *no*, and then *yes*; adding, "If I am denied, and they find out I am at home, they will only be the more spiteful when this story reaches their ears."

People who are conscious that they have made themselves the subject of their neighbours' gossip, which happened to be the case with these two ladies, are generally particularly glad to find any of their friends getting into the same dilemma; upon the principle, perhaps, that as the power of human tongues is limited, and they can only get through a certain portion of scandal in a day, the more multitudinous the victims, the more moderate must be the dividend allotted to each.

Any one who had observed the lingering pace with which the two visitors advanced along the street, with their arms linked, their closely approximated heads bent forwards—the frequent pauses, when at some interesting point of the conversation they drew up, and looked each other steadily in the face, might without difficulty have predicated that they were engaged on some very fresh and attractive

engaged on some very fresh and attractive piece of scandal. At length, after a more protracted pause, and a final summing up of the chief heads of the discourse at the door, they ascended the steps, rang the bell, and inquired if Mrs. Aytoun was at home. A significant glance shot from one to the other, when Susan said *yes*, showed that they had entertained some doubts of being admitted; and as they proceeded along the passage they endeavoured to subdue the animated and pleased expression their countenances had assumed under the influence of the late discussion, to the sad and solemn tone of sympathy that became the occasion.

"My dear Mrs. Aytoun," they both exclaimed with one voice as they entered the room, "how *do* you do?"

"Quite well, thank'ye," answered the pale and agitated Alicia with as much firmness as she could command.

"How late you are with your breakfast," observed Mrs. Bloxham; "you that used to be so early. One might see Mr. Aytoun wasn't at home."

"I wasn't very well, and staid in bed later than usual," said Alicia, forgetting that she had just said she *was* very well.

"Have you heard from Mr. Aytoun, lately?"

inquired Mrs. Morland. "Do you expect to see him soon?"

"I had a letter the day before yesterday," replied Alicia; "but he said nothing about returning."

Here there was a pause, and the dialogue flagged; as dialogues always do, when people are thinking of one thing and talking of another. Mrs. Morland, who was the most impetuous of the two, was dying to treat the subject after the epic fashion, and plunge in *medias res*; but Mrs. Bloxham, a more deliberate and cool headed person, wisely reflecting that that would be spoiling sport, and running down the game before she had well started from her cover, had enjoined her to be cautious, and leave the management of the affair in her hands.

"It's such a lovely morning; I wonder you don't go out," observed Mrs. Bloxham.

"I believe I shall, by and by," replied Alicia.

"What a sweet silk that is you've on," remarked Mrs. Morland, who was eager to draw near the subject.

"I'm sure you must have seen me wear it a hundred times," said Alicia. "It's quite old and faded now; it *was* pretty."

"A good silk wears so long," remarked Mrs. Bloxham, "and looks well to the last. They're the cheapest things in the end."

"Indeed they are," returned Mrs. Morland. "Do you remember that puce silk I used to wear last winter?" added she, addressing Mrs. Aytoun.

"I don't think I do," replied Alicia; which, *par parenthèse*, was not only an extremely imprudent answer on this particular occasion, but is so under all circumstances; because people feel a natural astonishment and indignation at your not remembering their puce silk; and under the excitement of those passions, are apt to enter into lengthy details with respect to the article in question, and elaborate eulogiums on its merits, which are sometimes less interesting to the hearer than to the speaker. Accordingly, Mrs. Morland exclaimed, "Well, I'm surprised you don't remember it! for the very first time I put it on was to come and dine with you—at that dinner you know that the roast beef was so under done, that you had it cut into slices and sent out to be broiled; don't you remember it, Mrs. Bloxham?"

"To be sure I do," answered Mrs. Bloxham, "I remember it perfectly."

"I remember that," said Alicia. "We were very unlucky about our dinner that day."

"Well then, I'm surprised you don't recollect my puce silk!" reiterated Mrs. Morland,

"for it was so much admired. I remember Mr. Aytoun was quite struck with it. Well, after wearing it for two years as a best gown for company, it lasted me the whole blessed winter for the streets, and very handsome it looked—didn't it, Mrs. Bloxham?"

"Very," returned Mrs. Bloxham, who hadn't the most distant recollection of ever having seen it.

"And now," continued Mrs. Morland, "I've turned it, and made it into a frock and spencer for Maria, and I'm sure nobody could tell it from new. By the by, she had it on last Sunday at church, Mrs. Bloxham, you must have observed it."

"Was it *that* Maria had on?" exclaimed Mrs. Bloxham, in the accents of wonder and admiration that the occasion called for. "I never should have thought it!"

"Well," continued Mrs. Morland, recurring to the motive with which she had introduced the subject, and which her indignant feelings at Mrs. Aytoun's oblivion had caused her for the moment to forget—"Well, I gave just four shillings a yard for that silk, twelve yards—two pound eight the dress came to; and six shillings I paid Miss Geddes for making it up—there was a trifle for lining too, and

tape—eighteenpence I think—I know I thought it a dear gown at the time; and Morland made a long face at it. But see how cheap it's been in the end. Always buy good things, I say; and that's why I like to deal at Green's; you're sure there to get your money's worth. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Bloxham? I know you deal there."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Bloxham, with a distinct and deliberate enunciation, and a countenance as fixed and unmoved as a stone idol; "Yes, I always do deal there; and I was there last night to get some buttons for a new set of shirts, I'm making up for Bloxham."

"And *I* was there this morning," said Mrs. Morland, "just before I called upon you."

Here the conversation languished again. The ladies had rather expected to have found Mrs. Aytoun in hysterics, or to have thrown her into them by their innuendoes; but Alicia though pale and depressed and really suffering agonies at heart, contrived to preserve an exterior of decent composure; and they had hoped to draw her into a full and detailed narration of her adventure; but conscious that she should meet with neither sympathy, sincerity, nor good counsel from them, she intrenched herself within a cautious silence; resolved

that unless they broke the barriers, she would not ; and the only part she took in the conversation, was occasionally to fill up the pauses in their dialogue, by polite inquiries after the health, educational progress, and general welfare, of Miss Morland, and the Master Bloxhams.

Finding that their visit was not likely to turn to any very good account, the ladies were beginning to think they might spend their time more profitably and agreeably in a succession of calls about the neighbourhood ; where they would have much to tell, and something to hear ; together with the incalculable advantage of having had an early interview with Mrs. Aytoun, which would entitle them to an enviable precedence in any convocation of gossips they might meet with ; and enable them to describe, with the minuteness of an entomologist, every particular of her looks, bearing, and demeanour.

At this interesting crisis, just as a certain telegraphic communication had been exchanged between the visitors, which being interpreted, implied, " I suppose we may as well go," there was heard a startling knock at the door. The summons bore such a decided character, such an undoubting assurance of welcome, and of a

claim to be admitted, and was, altogether, so unlike the timid, half-hesitating, bourgeois knocks usually heard in the neighbourhood, that it sent the blood into Mrs. Aytoun's cheeks, and caused the ladies immediately to recompose themselves in their seats.

"Mr. Seymour," said Susan, announcing and ushering in the elegant stranger of yesterday.

"I hope Mrs. Aytoun will excuse the earliness of my visit," said he, advancing towards her with great *empressement* and a most graceful *abord*, "but I was so extremely anxious—" here his eye caught sight of the two ladies, who being partly concealed by the door, he had not at first perceived—"anxious," continued he, in a more calm and reserved tone, "to learn if your cold was better, that I could not defer the honour of making the inquiry."

"It is better, I thank you," replied Mrs. Aytoun, blushing intensely at the awkward consciousness of having a secret understanding with a man who was almost a stranger to her.

Without dwelling farther on personal matters, the accomplished Mr. Seymour, who thoroughly knew the world, and comprehended his *terrain* at the first *coup d'œil*, immediately

directed the conversation into other channels; talking of theatres and exhibitions, parks and parties; and without any appearance of *fanfaronnade*, but as of things to which he was perfectly accustomed, of high people and high places.

No very elegant man ever entered a society of women without producing more sensation than the sex would be generally willing to confess; and when to his other advantages, he adds that towering one of belonging to a circle much more exalted than the company he has fallen amongst, he has it in his power to create a revolution in the minds of half the ladies present. He can make the unamiable, amiable; the malignant, charitable; and the good-humoured, dissatisfied and envious. Few, indeed, are exempt from his influence, but the women whose hearts are already in the bosom of another.

Accordingly Mrs. Morland and Mrs. Bloxham, who were very far from belonging to the last category, were carried off their feet by the grace, suavity, and conversational powers of Mr. Seymour. They were all smiles and dimples; and the malicious triumph they had come to enjoy over Mrs. Aytoun, was wholly forgotten in their pleasure in his society, and

their desire to appear amiable and agreeable in his eyes.

Most unwillingly, and prompted rather by an apprehension of seeming ill bred, and ignorant of the usages of the world, than by any better feeling, they at length took their gracious leaves; affectionately, of Mrs. Aytoun; and with a fascinating amenity, of the stranger.

He had no sooner bowed them out, and closed the parlour door upon them, and before Alicia had time to resume her seat, than Mr. Seymour, still gracefully and respectfully, but yet with the assurance of an accepted friend and confidant, advanced from the distant chair he had hitherto occupied, and tenderly taking her hand which he raised to his lips, was beginning to say, "My dear Mrs. Aytoun, now those afflicting persons are gone—" when the door opened, and Mrs. Bloxham putting in her head, cried, "I beg your pardon, but I've left my scarf somewhere—Oh there it is, fallen down behind the chair I was sitting in."

In all ages of the world *revenans* have been found extremely incommodious visitors. When people are once gone, whether out of the world, or out of a room, their departure should be final. Coming back upon any pretence whatever, whether it be to point out buried gold, or

to seek a silken scarf; whether to disclose a secret, or to pry into one, is altogether inexcusable, and a thing not to be tolerated. And certainly as regards themselves, their intrusion is extremely impolitic, and apt to be punished, by a verification of the old adage, that "listeners seldom hear any good of themselves."

So thought Alicia on the present occasion; but Mr. Seymour, nothing daunted, and probably esteeming the accident rather favourable to his views than otherwise, as it reduced the standard of Mrs. Aytoun's independence and self esteem "by a chopine," picked up the scarf, and after presenting it to the lady, and once more bowing her out with the same deference as before, returned, and drawing a chair close to Alicia, resumed the thread of his discourse. "My dear Mrs. Aytoun," he continued, "I was about to say, now those afflicting persons were gone—but people of that sort never *are* gone—but I am most anxious to hear how you really are after your most annoying adventure. I hope you have not suffered the affair to make more impression on you than it merits."

"More impression than it merits!" said Alicia, giving way to the tears she had sup-

pressed in the presence of her tormentors—"can it make more than it merits? Isn't it the most dreadful imputation that ever was cast on a respectable woman? And how am I to throw it off? How am I to recover my reputation? How am I to vindicate my innocence? Oh, Mr. Seymour, imagine what it must be, to be accused, insulted, searched like a common thief; dragged to a police office like a felon, and there amongst the very dregs of society, the low, the abandoned, the vicious, to be threatened with a gaol. Oh, my God!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands in agony, "is there no way of shaking this horror from me? must it for ever cling to me till it drags me to my grave, as it surely will. Tell me, Mr. Seymour, advise me, is there no help? can nothing be done to clear me from the stigma?"

"My dear Mrs. Aytoun," answered he, drawing his chair a little nearer, and again taking her hand, for Alicia was very attractive in the energy of her despair; "I really scarcely know how to advise. You see the misfortune of doing any thing in these affairs, unless you are quite sure of success, is, that every movement one makes only further disseminates the scandal, and adds to the publicity; and if once the newspapers get hold of you, you may as well

carry your misfortune inscribed upon your back ; there is no corner of the world to which you can escape from it."

" Good Heavens !" cried Alicia, struck with a new terror, " perhaps, even now, they may put it in the paper amongst the police reports !"

" Why," replied Mr. Seymour, " to confess the truth, I was apprehensive that might be the case ; and therefore yesterday evening, instead of going to a dinner at Lord H—'s, to which I was engaged, I took a coach, and drove round to the different publishing offices, where I managed, by a little *douceur*, to secure their silence."

" How can I thank you sufficiently !" exclaimed Alicia, warmly impressed with the extent of the obligation. " It would have been the climax of my misery to see my name in the paper."

" Which it would have been, I fear," returned Mr. Seymour, who had no intention of detracting any thing from his own merits and services—" and it is that that leads me to think, that if the affair could be hushed up—if, in short, we could induce this Mr. Green to let the thing drop, and satisfy him in some way or another—that is, make it his interest to pursue it no farther, that it would be the most prudent mode of proceeding."

"But he won't give it up," said Alicia. "I offered to pay him the value of the things from the beginning ; but he wouldn't take it."

"No, not the mere value of the things, I dare say," returned Mr. Seymour. "But he may not be able to resist the temptation if the bribe offered be large enough."

Alicia was silent, for she had no means of offering a bribe considerable enough to answer the purpose.

"At all events," said Mr. Seymour, "I'll take an opportunity of seeing him ; and hearing what he says. With respect to yourself, I'd advise you to have no communication with him whatever. The more independent and fearless you appear, the better chance there is of my success. And pray," he added with an appearance of the deepest interest, "keep up your spirits in the mean time ; do not suffer the circumstance, annoying as I admit it to be, to press too much on your mind ; but rely on my exertions, and if I may venture to use the term on so short an acquaintance, my regard, to extricate you from your dilemma."

It may easily be conceived that Mr. Seymour found motives or excuses for visiting his fair protégée every day ; and how was she, enchained by a confidence and an obligation of

such a nature, to shut her door against him? Besides, he contrived to make his visits so interesting; he had always something to tell, or something to suggest. And then he was the only person in the world, except Susan, with whom she permitted herself to speak of what was for ever the subject of her thoughts; so that daily his knock at the door became more welcome, and his visits more protracted.

Her neighbours and acquaintance, at first, paid her visits of curiosity; but finding that her obstinate silence disappointed them, they gradually relaxed in their assiduities, contenting themselves with watching her door to ascertain how often Mr. Seymour called, and how long he staid; endeavouring, at the same time, to persuade themselves and others, that their alienation was occasioned by a virtuous horror of her heterodox proceedings.

However, as time advanced, it became too evident to Mrs. Aytoun that Mr. Seymour's visits were by no means disinterested. He permitted himself gradually to betray all the symptoms of a decided passion; dropped them out one by one, with such a well acted air of inadvertence and absence of design, that it would have been impossible for Alicia to have doubted his sincerity. Indeed he was sincere enough

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for the moment. Alicia was a very attractive woman ; and he a man who made it a point to give way to all his susceptibilities, and never relax in his pursuit of a *bonne fortune* till he was satisfied success was utterly hopeless. He held that

“The proper” bus’ness “of mankind is” love ;

and he conceived it highly improbable, considering his own advantages, and the nature and amount of his services, that Alicia’s heart should remain untouched ; and next to impossible that, entangled as she was in a complication of embarrassing circumstances, her person should escape him.

But Alicia wore a shield over her heart that all the Seymours, Somersets, and Fitzroys that ever shone in the galaxy of fashionable life could not have penetrated—she loved Arthur Aytoun ;—and when she became thoroughly aware of Mr. Seymour’s views, she resolved to fly the danger—danger to her reputation, not to her affections—and by leaving town, without giving him any intimation of her design, she hoped to convince him that his pursuit was vain. And, indeed, she had other inducements to abandon the scene of her mortification. Unwilling to expose herself to the curious eyes of

her neighbours, she had made her house her prison ; and had debarred herself from air and exercise, which in her situation were especially necessary, till her health was affected by the privation. So, one day, she dispatched Susan, in whose prudence she could rely, by the coach to Hammersmith ; with directions to engage a small lodging for a month, in an agreeable situation ; and in two days afterwards, with no companion but this faithful servant, she departed with her baggage in a hackney coach ; leaving directions with her cook, that if any body inquired for her, she was simply to answer she was out of town, without communicating her address.

## CHAPTER XXX.

WHICH SHOWS THAT AGREEABLE SURPRISES DO NOT  
ALWAYS PROVE SO AGREEABLE AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN  
EXPECTED.

BUT Mrs. Aytoun had exceedingly underrated the power of her own charms, or the limits of Mr. Seymour's perseverance, when she imagined that her removal to Hammersmith would be of the slightest avail towards slackening the ardour of his pursuit. On the contrary, he no sooner found she was gone, than the affair assumed a piquancy that it had not before. Had she exhibited no inclination nor power to resist, there would neither have been excitement in the pursuit, nor triumph in its success; but nothing could be more agreeable to him than the interesting occupation she had furnished for his mornings, by her flight.

Finding the cook faithful to the instructions her mistress had given her, and not being able to make out any thing satisfactory by his description of the lady at the coach offices ; he next addressed her a note, on some matter connected with Mr. Green's affair, requesting an immediate answer ; and left it with the servant, desiring it might be forwarded without delay, as it was on a matter of importance.

"How soon," said he, "can I have an answer, do you think?"

"I'll put it in the post directly, Sir, and the answer will be here to-night, I dare say," replied the woman.

And so it was ; and upon that hint, Mr. Seymour took to mounting his gallant horse every morning, riding through all the towns and villages adjacent to London, and making inquiries at all the inns, libraries, grocers' shops, and so forth : with a success certainly indifferent as to the main point, but with infinite benefit to his own health, spirits, and good looks.

In the mean time poor Mrs. Aytoun, whether from the anxiety and agitation she had undergone, or from the previous undue confinement and privation of air which had debilitated her frame, had not been two days in the country,

before she was taken ill; and she found the hopes she had so fondly cherished were doomed to be disappointed. She suffered much, her recovery was extremely slow, and her return to London consequently deferred much beyond the period she had proposed.

At length Mr. Seymour's patience of research beginning to be somewhat exhausted; by way of bringing things to a crisis, he wrote to tell her that either some way must be found of inducing Mr. Green to drop proceedings, or her unfortunate affair would be very shortly brought before the public; and he added, that it was absolutely necessary he should see her, as it was impossible to discuss the matter to any purpose by letter.

"I must see him, I suppose," said she to Susan; "and yet I am extremely unwilling to let him come here; for when he has once ascertained where I am, I'm afraid he'll never be out of the house."

"Suppose you were to go to town for a few hours, Ma'am," said Susan, "and see him at your own house. You could easily come back by night."

"I could certainly," replied Alicia, "but you know the eyes of the whole street will be watching me; and what a strange appearance

it will have to go to town on purpose to meet him. I was thinking of saying that I'm staying at a friend's house where I can't receive him; and proposing to meet him somewhere else."

"That may do very well, Ma'am," replied Susan, "if you could be sure nobody 'll see you. But if they should, it would have a worse appearance than the other."

"It would certainly," said Alicia, "but it's hardly likely any body should see me. It is but for once. I think I'll appoint a time to meet him in Kensington Gardens. You and I could go by the coach as far as the Park gate; and I could walk to a seat, and there wait for him. What do you think?"

"Just as you please, Ma'am," replied Susan, who had nothing better to advise; and who being one of those people who thinking no evil herself, was not sufficiently aware how prone the world is to think it.

This plan was accordingly decided on; and the following morning, which happened to be Tuesday, appointed for the meeting.

By activity on his own part, spurred on as he was by an ardent desire to return home, and by a union of some fortunate circumstances, Mr. Aytoun, who had reckoned on being absent at least ten or twelve months, found his

business concluded, and himself at liberty to repair to England, before the expiration of seven. He had hinted, occasionally, in his letters to his wife, that he entertained hopes his absence might not be so protracted as they had expected; but had forbore to name any probable period for her seeing him, uncertain as he was himself; and preferring to give her an agreeable surprise, to the risk of occasioning a disappointment. He had yet to visit a considerable trading city in Germany, where he expected to be detained some time; when he received letters from the house he travelled for, saying, that a sudden emergency having occurred, which obliged them to dispatch a special messenger to that quarter, he was at liberty to return as soon as he pleased; and on the Monday evening, the evening on which Mrs. Aytoun and Susan had agreed upon the plan of meeting Mr. Seymour in the Gardens, Mr. Aytoun arrived at his own door.

He was in a hackney coach, having parted from the stage by which he had travelled up from the port he landed at; and as the lumbering vehicle slowly rolled down the street, he put out his head to catch the first glimpse of his own dear home. Alicia herself might have been visible; she might have been going out,

or coming home—and he so longed to see her. No Alicia, however, appeared; but instead, a gentleman, whom he observed coming out of the door; and who, after pausing a minute or two to say something to the servant who had opened it, deliberately descended the steps and walked up the street, reading with a smiling countenance a letter which he appeared to have just received. “Who the devil’s that?” said Mr. Aytoun to himself, as the handsome and elegantly dressed stranger passed the coach. “I’m sure it was my door he came out of. Open the door, coachman,” he cried, the moment the carriage stopped, and jumping out he vehemently pulled the bell and knocked at the same time, making the cook who was in the act of descending the kitchen stairs, say, as she turned to come up again, “Lord! I could have sworn that was master himself, if I didn’t know he was abroad.”

“Well, Betty,” said the eager husband, as the woman surveyed him with astonished eyes; “Is your mistress at home?”

“Lord, Sir,” answered Betty, “we never expected you so soon. My mistress don’t know a word of your coming, I’m certain.”

“I know she doesn’t,” replied Mr. Aytoun, turning into the parlour; “where is she?”

"My mistress is out of town, Sir," answered the maid, "and we expect her back the latter end of next week."

"Where the devil is she gone to?" inquired Mr. Aytoun, with surprise.

"Only as far as Hammersmith, Sir;" replied Betty; "she's in lodgings there; and has got Susan with her."

"What made her go there?" asked Mr. Aytoun. "Was she ill?"

"My mistress has been very poorly since she's been there, I hear, but she's better now," returned Betty, whose communicativeness was considerably checked by not knowing exactly what she should tell, and what she should not; and indeed her own acquaintance with the state of affairs was but imperfect; since neither Mrs. Aytoun nor Susan had given her any information; and what she had picked up of the gossip of the neighbourhood was such a distorted and exaggerated mass of incongruities, that it tended rather to puzzle than enlighten her.

"Very odd she didn't write," said Mr. Aytoun. "I've been wondering I didn't hear from her. It's too late for me to go to Hammersmith now," continued he, looking at his watch—"the coaches must all be gone; besides, I must contrive to see the Messrs. Karl this evening,

or early to-morrow morning. I'll just run over and ask the Parsons about her; I dare say they can tell me more.—By the by, Betty," added he, as he was leaving the house, "who was that I saw calling here just now?"

"A gentleman, was it, Sir?" said Betty, borrowing a little time for reflection.

"Aye, to be sure; just as I drove up—who is he?"

"Oh, Sir," said Betty, "that's Mr. Seymour."

"Seymour!" reiterated Mr. Aytoun, "what the deuce brought him here?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Sir;" returned Betty, whose caution augmented with the delicacy of the crisis.

"But you know what he came for," responded Mr. Aytoun. "Who did he ask for?"

"He didn't ask for any body, Sir," answered Betty.

"Well, but what did he say?" persisted Mr. Aytoun. "He didn't come to rob the house, did he?"

"Oh Lord! no, Sir, he's quite a gentleman, entirely. I believe he's an Honourable, or a Right Honourable, or something of that sort."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He only asked for a letter, Sir," answered Betty, finding further equivocation was useless.

ing, I said to Parsons, says I, Let us go and give the Morlands a call—”

“And you came; and I sent for Mrs. Bloxham to join us,” said Mrs. Morland.

“And I did,” said Mrs. Bloxham—“it’ll be just two months, come Monday, as Mrs. Parsons says. I know it from a particular circumstance.”

“But why did Alicia go?” inquired Mr. Aytoun, who was more curious about his wife than about Mrs. Bloxham’s particular circumstance, “was she ill?”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” answered all the ladies together.

“But what reason did she give?” asked Mr. Aytoun.

“I never heard what her reason was,” returned Mrs. Parsons. “Did you, Mrs. Morland?”

“Never,” returned Mrs. Morland.

“Nor I either,” added Mrs. Bloxham.

“Didn’t she say she was going?” inquired Mr. Aytoun, getting a little impatient.

“Not that I ever heard,” replied Mrs. Parsons. “Did you ever hear of it, Mrs. Morland?”

“Never,” answered Mrs. Morland.

“Nor I,” added Mrs. Bloxham.

“The first I heard of it,” said Mrs. Parsons,

"was just Maria calling me to the window to see the luggage put into the coach. 'La! mamma,' said she, 'I do think Mrs. Aytoun's going away somewhere; for only look at the band-boxes and things Betty's putting in;' and presently, sure enough, out came Mrs. Aytoun herself, and stepped into the coach, and Susan after her; and away they drove."

"And the first I heard of it," said Mrs. Morland, "was when Mrs. Parsons came up to us in the evening. Lord, my dear, says she, what do you think? Mrs. Aytoun's gone to rusticate a bit in the country."

"And I'm sure I'd never heard a word on the subject till you sent for me to tea that evening," said Mrs. Bloxham, "I declare I was quite surprised."

"This is very particular," thought Mr. Aytoun, who felt as if he were treading on enchanted ground, and was afraid to take another step, not knowing what was to come next. He was dying to learn more, and yet did not like to ask questions, lest his curiosity should be interpreted into suspicion.

"Then you've not been down to see her?" said he, after a pause.

"Oh dear no," replied the ladies.

"Indeed," added Mrs. Morland, "we

couldn't, had we been inclined; for we didn't know where she was,"

"Betty could have told you," said Mr. Aytoun.

"She said she didn't exactly know the address, when I asked her," replied the lady.

"And so she told me," said Mrs. Parsons.

"And me too," said Mrs. Bloxham.

"Well, ladies," said Mr. Aytoun, unable to bear these strange, significant sort of innuendoes any longer without betraying his impatience; "I must wish you good evening. I am obliged to see the Messrs. Karl before I can go to Hammersmith to Alicia; and I shall try to obtain an interview with one of them to-night, that I may be free to set off in the morning."

"To Hammersmith! so that's where she is?" exclaimed the ladies.

"My wife's no further away than Hammersmith," replied Mr. Aytoun, calmly. "She went there for her health," and he took his leave, leaving the ladies to enjoy their tea and scandal at their leisure.

Mr. Aytoun did not succeed in obtaining an interview with his employers on that evening, and could not therefore start so early in the morning as he had desired; but the moment he was free, he hastened to Piccadilly, where

mounting the box of one of the Hammersmith coaches, he was soon in a fair way of having the uneasy feelings that, in spite of himself, the evident mystery of his wife's conduct had inspired, either dispersed or confirmed.

As the coachman was rather behind his time, he drove at a good round pace; but as they passed the Park gates near the Kensington turnpike, Mr. Aytoun observed a hackney coach in waiting, and the coachman holding the door open as if the party to whom it belonged were approaching. Without knowing why, he turned his head to look at them as they came out of the gates. It consisted of a gentleman, a lady in a yellow shawl, and a plainly dressed person in a straw bonnet and black cloak, looking like a serviant maid. There was something in the air of the first, that put him so much in mind of the stranger he had seen leave his own door on the preceding evening, that he continued to watch the party till a turn in the road hid them from his view.

However, he had time to see him hand the females into the carriage, though not to ascertain whether he also got in himself. The lady, too, had very much the figure of Alicia; but he had never seen her wear either a bonnet or shawl like those she had on—but she might

have bought them during his absence. It struck him, also, that the third person was very like Susan; but he struggled against his own persuasion.

"It's those d—d women that have put this nonsense in my head," said he to himself. "I ought to know them well enough not to mind any thing they say; and yet I'm such a fool I can't help thinking of it."

However, on they went; and at the entrance of the town of Hammersmith, he got off the coach, and inquired his way to Prospect Place, whither he repaired on foot. It consisted of a neat row of small houses evidently constructed to attract the eye of the dwellers in cities; having showy little verandahs overgrown with creepers, small flower gardens in front, and being adorned with a profusion of green and white paint.

On inquiring if Mrs. Aytoun lived at the house he had been directed to, the girl who answered the door said, she did; but that she was not at home. She believed she was gone to Kensington; but that as she dined early, she was momentarily expecting her back.

"I'll wait for her then," said Mr. Aytoun. "Her servant's with her, I suppose?"

"Yes, Sir," answered the girl. "They went out together."

Mr. Aytoun ascended to the little drawing-room which was the apartment occupied by his wife. His temples beat audibly, and his heart felt too big for his bosom. He threw himself on the sofa, where lay her netting box, and a volume of "Clarissa," that she appeared to have been reading. "Alicia!" he said, pressing his hand on his forehead, "Alicia! Wife! What is it that's awaiting me? What strange and unknown fear is this that's creeping through my veins? Can it be possible, that in less than eight months her whole character can be changed? Can she have forgotten the principles on which I had so much reliance? Can the heart I thought so securely mine be already given to another? Oh, it's impossible," he exclaimed, endeavouring to rouse himself, and shake off the terror that was getting possession of him—"quite impossible. I'm a fool to believe it. Don't let me run to a conclusion, and make myself wretched without any thing to go upon. She may have had very good reasons for leaving town; and though I certainly do think that it was her I saw with that d—d fellow just now, I'll wait till I hear what she has to say. Perhaps the very first sentence may clear up the whole mystery, and show me what an ass I am to suspect her."

With this prudent supposition Mr. Aytoun endeavoured to compose his mind ; and it was not long before the sound of wheels stopping at the garden gate announced the arrival of his wife.

"There's a gentleman in the drawing-room," said the maid ; " he said he should wait till you came home."

" A gentleman !" said Alicia, " who in the world can it be ?"

" A tall gentleman," replied the maid.

" Good Heavens !" said Alicia to Susan, " depend on it it's Mr. Seymour, who has found out the house from the coachman, and contrived to get here before us. He said his horse and groom were waiting."

Susan thought so too ; and they ascended the stairs with the firm conviction that they should behold the gentleman they had so lately parted with.

It would have been natural, instead of waiting till his wife came up, that Mr. Aytoun should have run down to meet her the moment the coach stopped ; but he felt he could not do it. Try as he would, he could not assume the glad, free, joyous bearing with which he had been accustomed to embrace her after an absence ; and he stood in the middle of the room,

listening to her foot as she ascended, rather like a man who was awaiting an enemy than the wife of his bosom.

"Good Heavens!" cried she, stopping short as she entered the room, "Arthur! is it you?"

"It is me, Alicia," said he, advancing towards her—"how are you?"

Now, if Mr. Aytoun had acted naturally and ran down to the door to meet her, she would have thrown herself into his arms with exactly the same fervour and affection she had done on all former occasions; but the coldness and constraint of his manner was reflected in her's. It brought the consciousness of all he had yet to learn, that she knew would be so displeasing to him, full upon her mind; and thus they met, not like parted lovers as they were, but like persons merely on civil terms of acquaintanceship.

The thing was too unnatural not to be deeply felt by both. Each attributed it to the other; he fancied that she was annoyed at his return; and she, that he had heard something of her affair at the police office; and as neither had resolution enough to ask for an explanation; their constraint instead of diminishing, increased every moment.

"Where have you been, Alicia?" said the

husband, looking at the yellow shawl, which he immediately recognised.

"Susan and I went to take a walk in the Gardens," she replied. "I thought a little change would do me good."

"You don't look well," observed he.

"I have not been well," she replied. "I had hoped, Arthur, to have some good news for you against you returned—but I have been disappointed."

"What do you mean?" said he.

"I have been in the family way," said she, blushing, and really, from his odd manner, feeling as abashed as if she were telling the thing to a stranger.

"In the family way!" he reiterated, in a tone that testified much more surprise than pleasure.

"Yes," answered she, her confusion momentarily augmenting; "soon after you went I found that was the case; and about two months since, not feeling very well, I came down here; and only two days afterwards, I was taken ill."

"You never mentioned a word of such a thing to me in your letters," said the husband, regarding her with scrutinizing eyes.

"No," replied she; "I wished to give you an agreeable surprise; and after my disappoint-

ment I was not able to write for some time ; but I sent a letter to Frankfort, about a fortnight ago, wherein I told you all about it.’

“ I have not been to Frankfort,” replied he. “ Then you came here because you didn’t feel well ?” he continued, after a pause, “ was that the reason !”

“ Yes,” said she, “ that was the principal reason,” and her cheeks crimsoned at the recollection of the other reason, and the apprehension of his knowing it. “ When did you arrive, Arthur ?” said she.

“ Last night,” he replied, “ about eight o’clock.”

“ Did you see any body besides Betty ?” said she.

“ I saw the Parsons’, and the Morlands, and the Bloxhams ; they were all together at tea, and called me over.”

“ I suppose they were not very well pleased at my not telling them where I was coming to ?” said Alicia, curious to discover what had been said.

“ They seemed to think it odd, certainly,” returned Mr. Aytoun, “ and so I thought it myself.”

“ They’re such tiresome, gossiping people,” said Mrs. Aytoun, “ that not being well, I

was not in a humour to be troubled with them."

And in this sort of strain the conversation was carried on, without affection, without confidence; each hiding their heart from the other; his suspicions and her fears every moment augmenting; till, at last, to her relief, though very much to her surprise, Mr. Aytoun, about a couple of hours after dinner, suddenly arose, and saying he had business in the city which called him to town, bade her good evening, and walked away, intending, as he said, to get upon the first coach that overtook him on it's road to London.

"Shall you be here to-morrow?" asked Alicia, following him to the top of the stairs.

"Most likely," he replied, "I can't say positively;" and the next minute the door closed on him and he was gone.

Alicia threw herself on the sofa and wept; whilst he, far from thinking of getting on a coach as he had said he intended, strode along the road at the rapid pace that men are wont to walk who desire to walk away from themselves and their own thoughts. He couldn't have commanded patience to have sat in, or on, the fastest coach that was ever drawn by four horses. The motion of his own limbs seemed

indispensable to his very existence. Had he been forced to sit still—had the engine been stopped, and he debarred from applying to bodily exercise the superfluous energy of his passion, he felt as if the vapours of wrath that were boiling within him, must have rent his heart in twain.

When he reached the Park gates where he had seen the coach in the morning, he turned in, and stopped for an instant to look around, as if he still expected to see the handsome stranger lurking near.

“I wonder if she meets him here every day!” said he to himself. “I shall be sadly in their way, I’m afraid.” The hour was between four and five; and the Park was thronged with gay equipages and fashionable equestrians. When he reached the Piccadilly extremity of the walk, he was obliged with many others, to draw up for a minute or two to wait for an opportunity of crossing. Leaning with their backs against the rails, and patting their shining black boots with their ebony canes, or silver mounted riding whips, was a row of fashionable young men, who having finished their ride, had dismounted, and were grouping together to talk over the affairs of the day; and remark on the beauties and celebrities as they slowly rounded that

crowded corner, where the crossing and jostling of carriages entering and leaving the Park, the access to which was far from being as wide and commodious at that time as it is at present, obliged the emulous, struggling, and impatient drivers to slacken their pace.

"I say, Seymour!" cried the thin voice of a very young man who, still mounted, had drawn up his horse by the rails, close to this group of exquisites—"Seymour, I say!"

"Well, what do you say?" asked the rich, deep voice of Seymour.

"I've been calling to you this half hour," said the other. "I want to know who that woman was I saw you with in the Gardens this morning."

"You don't expect I should tell you, do you?" said Seymour carelessly.

"She's devilish pretty," said the youth.

"She is pretty," returned Seymour.

"I only ask for the reversion," said the young man; who being but just turned loose upon the world, was anxious to show himself already initiated into all the profligacies of high life. "You owe me something for my forbearance," continued he, "for I might have spoiled sport if I'd liked, and flurried your bird before you came up."

"How so?" inquired Seymour.

"Why," said the other, "I am aid-de-camp in waiting, you know, this week; and I had to go to the palace with a message; so I got off my horse at the gate to walk across the Gardens; and just as I'd crossed the broad walk, I caught a glimpse of a bright yellow shawl glancing amongst the trees, evidently wishing to keep out of sight—ladies should never wear yellow shawls when they go to a rendezvous, they're so devilish conspicuous—so I pushed through the copse, and presented myself right in front of her."

"D—d impudent of you," said Seymour.

"You know, my dear fellow, I couldn't tell she was waiting for you," replied the boy, "or I should have kept off; I never poach on my friends' manors. However, I got a capital view of her face; and a devilish pretty one it was."

"But how did you know she was there to meet me?" returned Seymour.

"Because I saw you with her as I came back," said the youth. "I passed through the trees close to you, attracted again by the yellow shawl. You were coming it strong, I fancy, Seymour, eh? She'd got her handkerchief to her eyes; and you were squeezing

her hand, and laying it on like the old serpent himself, I've no doubt. Don't forget I'm for next turn," cried the beardless boy, as he cantered away; thinking he had shown a manhood that might have become Julius Cæsar himself.

"What an insufferable coxcomb that is!" said Seymour, looking after him.

"Shocking puppy!" echoed the others, shrugging their shoulders; and finding the conversation reverted no more to the yellow shawl, Arthur Aytoun walked on.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## THE CHALLENGE.

ON the following morning Mrs. Aytoun received a few lines from her husband, saying that he was detained in town by business, and should not be able to see her on that day.

Alicia was relieved; she had hopes that that morning was to see her free from her embarrassments, and release her from the dangerous and inconvenient necessity of further interviews with Mr. Seymour. He had informed her on the preceding day, that since he had written to her, he had had another conversation with Mr. Green, on whom he thought he had, at last, made some impression.

"I am to see him again to-night," continued he, "when I am to have his final answer; and

if you will allow me the honour of meeting you to-morrow at the same hour—here, if you *really* cannot receive me where you are staying, I shall be able to tell you the result; and give you any advice that the circumstances may render necessary;” and Alicia, eager to be released from the terrors that hung over her, and if possible extricate herself from the whole *imbroglio* before her husband’s return, had consented to meet him; fully determined that it should be the last time. She doubted very much Arthur’s having received any hint of Mr. Green’s accusation, and of the police office story; for she thought if he knew it, he could not have forbore to have mentioned it instantly; and it was her ardent desire, dreading as she did the effect it would have on his susceptible pride, that he never should hear of it. She rather concluded, on reflection, that his coldness had proceeded partly from the surprise he felt at her leaving town without telling him; and partly, probably, from her own embarrassment and confusion, which must have made her appear as cool to him as he did to her. • “Once free from this odious business,” she said to herself, “I should soon regain my spirits, and be myself again; and Arthur would think the difference he observed in me

had arisen from my illness. As for Mr. Seymour, I am very much obliged to him; but I can't sacrifice my own happiness and my husband's to his gratification; and I am quite sure Arthur would never tolerate his visits for a moment. I shall tell him I am sincerely grateful, which I am; but that Mr. Aytoun is returned; and that if any suspicion of our acquaintance reached him, it might occasion the most distressing consequences to all parties; and I shall throw myself on his honour and generosity not to seek any further interviews or correspondence. If he is the gentleman I take him to be, he can't refuse; and, indeed, I don't know why he should; for he must have clearly seen, by my avoiding him as I have done, that any other dénouement to the adventure is not to be looked for."

But Mr. Seymour saw no such thing; on the contrary he looked with confidence to a dénouement much more flattering and agreeable. The price of Mr. Green's forbearance was to be five hundred pounds. He had hinted nothing of the sort to Alicia, lest she should take fright at the magnitude of the obligation, and refuse to incur it; but the money once paid, and irrevocably enclosed in the hard fists of the grasping haberdasher, he considered that she would be

so completely involved in his toils, that she would have no alternative but to purchase her immunity by the sacrifice of her honour.

At the appointed hour, accompanied by Susan, as before, Alicia repaired to the rendezvous; and never did any unfortunate woman incur the appearance of guilt with less inclination to commit it, than herself. Her whole heart was with her husband; and all Mr. Seymour's graces and fascinations had made no more impression on her, than if they had been squandered on the effigy of the chaste Diana. Indeed the more empressment he evinced, the more she was repelled. Nothing can be so abhorrent to a woman really in love with one man, as the slightest approach to *tendresse* or familiarities from another. In a chaste and delicate woman's heart there can exist no partnership; and the mere pressure of a hand, if it is not the one hand she loves, sends back the blood in her veins with the cold chill of disgust. There are, doubtless, many unhappy circumstances that may force a most virtuous woman to give her hand where she cannot give her heart; but where she gives her heart, she gives her hand *indeed*; not metaphorically, according to the newspaper ritual, but according to a ritual that nature has established in her own breast. Her

whole and entire self is the property of the one beloved, even where the love is unrequited and disowned ; and the most distant attempt at an encroachment on the rights with which it has pleased her generous and devoted affection to invest him, is recoiled from as a profaning of the holy temple dedicated to the pure worship of the idol she has set up.

Mr. Seymour was at the rendezvous before her. He thought it not unlikely that the young coxcomb who had seen her on the preceding day, might be again crossing the Gardens on his way to the palace ; and he did not choose that the woman for whom he designed the honour of being seduced by himself, should be insulted by another.

"I flatter myself," said he, "I have been successful at last with that fellow ; and I think you may now consider yourself secure of hearing no more on the subject."

"I am most grateful to you," she returned. "I cannot describe the obligation you have conferred on me. Mr. Aytoun is, of all persons in the world, the one least able to endure that the slightest reflection should be cast upon his wife, or any body belonging to him. His susceptibility on such subjects is quite morbid ; and I assure you, innocent as our acquaintance

has been, I tremble lest it should reach his ears. He would so entirely disapprove of my having permitted your visits in Craven Street, that nothing but a full explanation of all that led to them, would exonerate me from his displeasure. I fear, therefore, after thanking you most sincerely for a service I can never cease to remember with gratitude, that I must request, as a last favour, that you will permit our acquaintance to terminate with this interview."

"Is it possible?" returned Mr. Seymour, "that in requital—I will not say of the service I have had the happiness to render you, for that is its own reward; and if it had cost me five thousand pounds, instead of five hundred, I should have thought the pleasure cheaply purchased—but is it a fair requital for the regard that prompted my exertions, to banish me from your presence the moment I cease to be useful?"

Mr. Seymour had expected that his allusion to the money would have awakened Alicia's curiosity, and alarmed her delicacy; and he was surprised that she had not interrupted him on the instant to demand an explanation; but Alicia's eyes, and thoughts, and whole soul were bent on a figure she dimly

discerned, hovering near them, through the trees; and his eloquence was squandered on unheeding ears.

The person, whoever it was, was evidently watching them, and concealing himself. As they advanced, and their change of position would have exposed him to their view, he retreated, hiding himself first behind one tree and then another; but still keeping near enough to observe their motions. A cold fear crept through Alicia's veins, and her heart sunk heavy within her, for she thought it was her husband. It was not so much from the intelligence of her eyes that she judged, for she had seen the figure too imperfectly to recognise it; but some other sense, like that which warns the ghost seer that a spirit from the grave is near, whispered that it was Arthur. Like one, too, in the presence of some such fearful apparition, her speech forsook her, her voice died away in her throat, her knees bent under her, and she laid her hand on Mr. Seymour's arm, partly to prevent herself from sinking to the earth, and partly in the design of drawing his attention to the person that was dodging them.

But Mr. Seymour, who was carried away by his own eloquence, and occupied with his

own views, having seen nothing of what alarmed his companion, mistook the motive of the action. He imagined she was overcome by the announcement of the price at which he had purchased her immunity; that she was vanquished by his generosity, and that her reserve was melting in the beams of its splendour; and under that persuasion, he suddenly flung his arm about her waist, and pressed her, half fainting as she was, and almost incapable of resistance, even had there been time for it, with fervour to his heart.

Like lightning, quicker than words can speak it, the figure Alicia had descried, darted upon them, from behind a neighbouring tree; with one hand he tore her from the arm that encircled her, and flung her off with such force, that she fell to the earth at a distance of several yards from the spot where the impulse had been received; whilst with the other, he dealt Mr. Seymour a blow across the face that in an instant deluged his whole person with blood—pale and gasping with passion, and with a countenance in which revenge sat glaring at her victims, Authur Aytoun stood before them.

Mr. Seymour was quickly upon his feet, and whilst wiping the blood from his face,

he looked with almost as much astonishment as resentment at the author of so unexpected an assault. Alicia had not yet told him of her husband's return; and his first notion was that he had been assailed by a lunatic; but Mr. Aytoun's first words undeceived him.

"Villain!" cried the enraged husband, "cowardly, sneaking villain, infamous seducer of honest men's wives, when you think their absence ensures you impunity—wretch, not worthy to breathe the pure air of heaven that you pollute with your adulterous vows—you perhaps don't know me? But you shall learn to know me to the peril of your body that I'll tear piecemeal; and of your soul that I'll send to hell! I am that woman's husband!"

"Sir," replied Mr. Seymour, with a command of himself that considering the situation he was placed in, was truly surprising; and which nothing could inspire but that great usage of the world, which if it does not subdue, most assuredly tempers the rage of angry passion, and gives man the power of moderating the expression of its violence, "Sir, under the circumstances in which we are mutually placed, words of any sort are worse than useless. No explanation I could make could appease your resentment; and even if it could, no apology on your

part could efface the affront I have received. Blows, Sir, unless from a person I could meet on no other terms, I never return. These," and he held out his hands, "these are not the weapons I am accustomed to use. Here is my card—make your arrangements to-day; and at as early an hour to-morrow morning as you please to appoint, and at whatever spot you choose to name, you will find me punctually awaiting you."

As Mr. Seymour concluded these words, he picked up his hat that was lying on the ground, and having smoothed round the nap with the cuff of his coat, he cast a pitying glance at Alicia, who with her head supported on Susan's lap was still stretched in a state of insensibility on the earth; and then bowing calmly, and with perfect grace and self-possession to Mr. Aytoun, he walked deliberately away to where he had left his horse and groom.

Mr. Aytoun looked after him for a moment, and then, without even casting his eyes in the direction where his wretched wife was lying, he turned his back towards the path Mr. Seymour had taken; and like a chafed lion, striding through the wildest and most unfrequented parts, he crossed the Gardens, and issuing from them by the Bayswater gate, he returned by that road to London.

For some time Susan sat on the ground supporting her mistress, afraid to leave her, and unable to remove her. At length catching a glimpse of a man at a little distance, she called to him. He proved to be one of the rangers, and with his assistance she contrived to get the unfortunate Alicia conveyed to the lodge. There, after a while, they succeeded in restoring her so far, that Susan ventured to have her carried to the coach ; and bidding the driver make all the speed he could, they soon reached Hammersmith ; where, yet but imperfectly remembering what had occurred, Mrs. Aytoun was lifted out of the carriage, and conveyed to her own bedchamber.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## THE DUEL.

SOME hours elapsed before, by means of restoratives and a reclining position, Alicia revived sufficiently to recall the scene she had witnessed. From repeated fainting fits she had sunk at length into an uneasy slumber, and Susan had ventured out of the room for a few minutes, to direct that some tea should be prepared for her against she awoke, when she was summoned to return by the violent ringing of Mrs. Aytoun's bell; and on rushing up stairs, she found her mistress standing on the landing place, half undressed as she had left her, with cheeks as white as the muslin peignoir that was flung around her person, and looking rather like one late risen from the grave than

an inhabitant of the earth, but supported on her limbs by the flame that was raging within her.

"Susan!" she cried with vehemence, as soon as she descried her faithful attendant—"oh, Susan, why did you let me rest? I must be up and stirring, girl, or I have rested my last rest on earth. Send off instantly for a post-chaise, and while they are fetching it, come you, and get me ready—we must away to London."

Susan obeyed without a word; she thought it better she should go. She might do good, but even if she did not, to have denied her the relief of, at least, attempting to do something, would have been cruel; the feelings that urged her, had they found no vent in action, might have destroyed her reason.

"Tell me," said she, whilst Susan assisted her to dress, "tell me every thing that passed—every word you heard. For myself, I saw nothing after I was flung to the earth—the last thing I remember, was seeing Mr. Seymour's face streaming with blood. Of course there was a challenge; did you hear when they are to meet?"

"To-morrow morning early," replied Susan, who thought the danger much too serious to

risk any thing by diminishing its imminence ;  
“but the place was not fixed. Mr. Seymour gave master his address, and left him to settle it as he pleased.”

“And where was the address, Susan ?” asked Alicia, eagerly.

“It was a card he gave, Ma’am ; he didn’t mention it,” returned Susan.

“Oh that he had !” exclaimed Alicia. “Perhaps he would take pity on me if I could see him ; but I have no idea where he lives. I think I once heard him say he lodged, when he was in town, at an hotel ; but how am I to discover which ; and so little time to do it in ?”

The chaise was quickly at the door, and a very short time sufficed to convey them to Craven Street.

“Is your master here ?” cried Mrs. Aytoun, anxiously, as soon as Betty appeared at the door.

“No, Ma’am,” replied the calm and unconscious Betty. “Master has not been here since he left yesterday morning. I thought he was with you at Hammersmith.”

“What !” said Mrs. Aytoun as she threw herself on her sofa, “didn’t he sleep here last night ?”

“No, Ma’am,” replied Betty ; “I’ve seen nothing of him.”

"Then he must have been told something before he came to me," said Mrs. Aytoun.

"Master went over to Mrs. Parsons," said Betty, who perceived that there was something wrong.—"And oh! I forgot, master saw Mr. Seymour, Ma'am, when he called for your note the night before last. He was just at the door when master's coach drove up—"

No further explanation was necessary; Alicia saw it all; and her only hope lay in the chance of finding her husband, and inducing him by a timely explanation to make an apology to Mr. Seymour, and forego the meeting. Susan ran for a coach; and they were soon started on a chase, unfortunately not very likely to prove successful. Alicia knew nothing of her husband's haunts; or rather, he had none to know. His home had been his haven; and he was seldom away from it, except when engaged on business. The hours for business were passed, for it was already between eight and nine o'clock; and she almost feared she should find no one at the office of the Messrs. Karl, where she first proceeded; and it proved indeed that every one had left it but the porter.

"Mr. Aytoun has not been here, Ma'am," said he, in answer to her inquiries, "since yesterday morning. I am quite sure of it;

because I know Mr. Karl has been expecting him all day ; and waited at home for him several hours ; and he desired me, if he came, to beg he would be here by ten o'clock to-morrow."

Alicia next directed the coachman to the private residences of the Messrs. Karl ; and in succession to the house of every other acquaintance she could think of ; but with the same result. No one had heard or seen any thing of Arthur Aytoun.

"Oh, how like him," she said ; "my poor, poor husband ; he's hiding his unhappy head that he thinks I have covered with shame ; whilst I, his wretched and innocent wife, am seeking in vain to undeceive him."

Her endeavours to find her husband proving fruitless, her last hope was in obtaining an interview with Mr. Seymour ; but how to discover his residence ? She only knew that he was the Honourable Mr. Seymour, and that he generally lodged at an hotel. Armed with these feeble indications, she set forth on this new quest ; and after inquiring at the door of a vast number of hotels at the West end of the town, she at length learned that there was an Honourable Mr. Seymour lodging at one in Grosvenor Street ; and thither she immediately drove.

It was now near midnight ; but the door of the house was partly open, and she saw a light in the passage. The coachman rang the bell and the summons was quickly answered by a waiter.

"Does the Honourable Mr. Seymour lodge here ?" asked Alicia.

"Sometimes, Ma'am," replied the waiter. "He always keeps a room here, and we take in his letters."

"Is he here now ?" said she.

"No, Ma'am," returned the waiter. "He hasn't been here since the morning ; he called then to give some orders ; but he said he should not return to sleep."

"Oh, my God !" cried Alicia, unconscious of the insolent curiosity with which the waiter was surveying her, "and can't you tell me where he's to be found ?"

"No, Ma'am," returned the man, who could have told her very well if he had pleased ; for Mr. Seymour had been there on his return from the Gardens, to say that he expected some letters of consequence ; and that they must be forwarded to the house of his friend Colonel Alleyn the moment they arrived. But the man had some doubts how far the visits of a lady, in a hackney coach, at twelve o'clock

at night might be agreeable to the Honourable Mr. Seymour. He remembered some visits of the like sort before, which had terminated in tears and reproaches from one party, and sundry smart oaths addressed to himself from the other, for not having prevented the interview: so, on this occasion, he resolved to be prudent; and having given what he intended should be his final answer, he turned on his heel, and re-entered the house.

"Where now, Ma'am," asked the coachman.

"Where shall we go, Susan?" said Alicia. "I shall go mad if I return home, and sit there doing nothing but count the hours till the dreadful morning."

"Suppose we were just to drive there, and see if master's called since we came out, Ma'am," said Susan, by way of proposing something to pacify her. "There's no telling you know, he might wish to leave some message, or a letter, or something."

"So he might," replied Alicia; "and in that case he wouldn't go till night, lest the neighbours should see him. Tell the man to drive home instantly," she added impatiently.

"Go back to Craven Street, directly," said Susan; and the slow and burly coachman encumbered with great coats, gradually ascended to his box.

"Good Heavens!" said Mrs. Aytoun, "I wish he'd make haste; every moment is precious. I may miss seeing Arthur by the delay," and she thrust her head out of the window to bid him be quick.

At that instant the door of the hotel opened, and a gentleman stepping out, walked rapidly away. Mrs. Aytoun, whose attention was engaged by the coachman did not observe him till he had moved two or three yards from the door, but then, whether he had heard her voice, or from whatever cause it might be, he turned his head and looked back. Imperfect as the light was, she was quite sure it was her husband.

"Let me out!" she cried to the man who had just succeeded in getting his horses to move on—"Let me out! Or drive after that gentleman as fast as you can."

"Which shall I do, ma'am?" asked the man with imperturbable coolness, and making no attempt to do either.

"Oh, let me out," she cried, struggling with the handle of the door.

"Let me, Ma'am," said Susan, "I can open it;" and in a moment more Alicia had jumped out, and was in full chase of her husband; Susan, of course, following with all the speed she could.

But Susan being last, she had not gone many steps before she found her progress arrested by the stout arm of the coachman ; whose natural apathy being overcome by the peril of his fare, had contrived to tumble off his box much quicker than he had mounted it ; and now demanded to know what they meant by bilking him.

"It's no use your stopping me," said Susan impatiently, "for I have but a couple of shillings in my pocket—you may have them if you choose, and if you'll call to-morrow in Craven Street where you took us up, you shall be paid as much as you please. Only let me go now, that I may overtake my mistress, for I believe she's going out of her senses."

"She seems maddish, sure enough," replied the coachman ; and won by the liberal promise of being paid as much as he pleased, he let go her arm ; and giving a view holloa after her as she set out, he remounted his box, and drove to a neighbouring public house ; where, considering the two shillings as extra money, and no part of his fare, he converted them into copious draughts of porter, and hot brandy and water.

In the mean time, Susan, who had lost sight of her mistress by the delay, and only knew that she had ran towards Bond Street, followed in

the same direction ; but when she reached the corner, she was uncertain which way to take ; till a watchman, who was passing at the moment, said he had just seen a lady cross the street and run towards Hanover Square.

Away went poor Susan, crossing the square, and through street after street, fancying at first she saw her mistress before her ; and afterwards running on, more from her alarm and confusion, than from any rational hope of overtaking her ; till she found herself in one of the streets leading out of Soho. She then recognised where she was ; which before, so erratic had been her course, she had not very well known ; and she slackened her pace to consider what she should do.

"My mistress will surely go home," thought she, "whether she overtakes Mr. Aytoun or not ; and the best thing I can do, is to go there too."

She had just arrived at this decision, and was thinking which was the most direct way to reach the Strand, when a powerful grasp was laid upon her arm, and a man in the dress of a sailor said—"Give me what money you have about you, or I'll take your life."

"For God's sake don't hurt me," replied Susan. "I haven't a farthing in my pocket, I do assure you."

"Have you a watch?" asked the man sternly.

"No," answered Susan. "I never had such a thing belonging to me. I'm only a poor servant; pray let me go!"

"I'll see if you're telling me a lie," said the man, and he put his hand to her side to feel her pocket.

"I'm telling you the truth," said Susan. "I'd rather give you my money if I had any, than be kept here. Pray let me go!"

"Go, and be d—d!" said the man as he dropped her arm, and hastened away in the direction of Oxford Street; whilst Susan took the opposite one.

"I've seen that man before, I'm certain," said she to herself, "but I can't think where;" and as she walked on at a rapid pace to Craven Street, she reviewed all the situations and circumstances in which it was possible she might have met with him; but without being able to assign either time or place to the recollection that had struck her.

When she reached Craven Street, her dismay was great at finding Mrs. Aytoun had not arrived; but as she did not know in what direction to seek her, she concluded that the most advisable thing she could do, was to wait there till she came.

However, the night passed without any intelligence of her ; and it was not till between eleven and twelve o'clock on the following day, that a man arrived from Hammersmith with a message, saying that Mrs. Aytoun had been brought to Prospect Place early in the morning, having been found in the Gardens in a state of delirium. It appeared that she had passed the night in searching for, or imagining she was searching for her husband ; and the lodge-keeper at Kensington, said, that when he opened the gates in the morning, he had found her waiting there in a hackney coach ; and had let her in, thinking she looked strange, but not aware that there was any thing wrong. After waiting upwards of two hours, the coachman whom she had not paid, spoke to the keeper, and mentioned how he had taken her up at the dawn of day in Piccadilly, and said that he had some suspicion that she was out of her senses ; which inducing the keeper to search for her in the Gardens, she was found lying on the ground exactly on the spot where her husband and Mr. Seymour had quarrelled on the preceding day. She was extremely unwilling to be taken away, alleging that she was waiting there to prevent her husband being killed in a duel. Finally, however, they had

succeeded in removing her ; and the keeper, who on the previous day had learned her address, had sent her to Hammersmith in the coach accompanied by his wife. Susan lost no time in repairing thither, also ; and to her great relief she found her already in bed, and under the care of the medical man who had attended her in her late illness.

Where was Arthur Aytoun the while ? Alas ! Arthur Aytoun was in custody for the murder of Mr. Seymour. Never doubting his wife's guilt, and mad with passion, he had written to Mr. Seymour, that he should take no second to the meeting, and that the contest must last till one of them fell. Mr. Seymour, who knew that Mr. Aytoun was not so much injured as he imagined, and only waited till by an exchange of shots the affront he himself had received should be wiped away, to tell him so ; did not think himself bound to comply with the conditions demanded. He therefore went to the ground accompanied by his friend. But Mr. Aytoun refused to listen to any thing Colonel Alleyn had to say ; or to submit to any of the regulations established for such occasions. He said he came there with the determination to kill Mr. Seymour, or to be killed himself ; and scarcely waiting till the

ground was measured, and before any signal could be given, he fired, and Mr. Seymour fell, shot through the heart, having only time to say, "It was my own fault," before he expired.

Mr. Aytoun made no attempt to escape ; on the contrary, he kept his ground sullenly, till the officers arrived to take him into custody ; avowing, that he came there with the intention of taking Mr. Seymour's life, and that they were very welcome to take his in return.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## SUSAN MAKES A VISIT TO NEWGATE.

A DANGEROUS fever accompanied by delirium confined Mrs. Aytoun for many weeks to her bed ; and during the wanderings of her brain, her thoughts unceasingly ran on the events of that dreadful day and night. Sometimes she would imagine herself kneeling at her husband's feet, and in the most affecting terms would assure him of her innocence ; and swear that she loved him a thousand times better than her own existence. At others she would fancy herself still pursuing him through the streets whilst he fled from her ; and then again she would speak of it to Susan as a thing past.

"Wasn't it cruel of him," she would say, "to make me follow him all the live long night, and yet never let me overtake him ? The

faster I ran, the faster he ran ; and yet I could see him all the time. Sometimes when I was tired, I slackened my pace, and then he turned and beckoned me to come on—and when I couldn't go any further and sat down upon a step to rest, I heard his voice calling to me, *Alicia ! Alicia !* he said, *Come on ! Come on !*”

The first symptom she gave of her returning senses was, that, one day, when she had been asleep, and Susan was sitting by her bedside at work, she suddenly awoke, and raising herself on her elbow, she drew aside the curtain that concealed Susan from her view, and looking steadily in her face, she said, “Is Arthur dead ?”

“No, Ma'am,” replied Susan, “master's alive and well.”

Alicia then fell back on her pillow, and went to sleep again, and it was not till the next day that she made any further attempt at conversation.

“Susan,” said she, on the following morning, “I believe I've been very ill.”

“You have, Ma'am,” replied Susan, “but, thank God, you're better.”

“That's not it,” said she putting her hand to her head—“it's something else.”

Susan was afraid to suggest what she might

probably wish to ask ; lest the recollection of the late events should be too much for her.

"I dare say you wish to ask after Master, Ma'am," said she; "he's very well; but you're not to see him till you're stronger."

"Who says so?" asked she.

"The doctor says so, Ma'am," replied Susan.

"Oh, very well," she said; and after that she appeared satisfied, and her health rapidly improved.

But as her strength returned, so did her memory; and by degrees she extracted from Susan, question by question, an account of all that had happened, except the death of Mr. Seymour, and Arthur's imprisonment. Those two circumstances, which she herself had learned from the medical man, Susan thought it prudent to withhold.

At length, one day, when Mrs. Aytoun was considerably recovered, though not yet strong enough to leave her bed, Susan said to her, "I have been thinking, Ma'am, that perhaps if you would give me leave to go to town, and try to see Master, that I might do some good."

"I'm afraid he wouldn't listen to you, Susan," said Mrs. Aytoun. "Depend on it Mr. Seymour has told him I'm guiltless; for though he's profligate enough to have desired

to seduce me, I do not believe him so wicked as to let me lie under an imputation that he knows I don't merit. And yet, you see, Arthur would let me die deserted and broken-hearted before he'd stretch out a hand to save me."

"Nevertheless, Ma'am," said Susan, who had heard that Mr. Seymour had died before he had time to enter into any explanations; and who was aware that Arthur couldn't come if he would; "Nevertheless, Ma'am, if you've no objection, I should like to go. It is your duty to do all you can to clear yourself—if Master won't listen to the truth, God forgive him!"

"Go, Susan!" said Alicia, "go, my honest girl, and may the blessing of Heaven go with you!"

Accordingly, on the following day, Susan left Hammersmith by one of the early coaches; and having ascertained that her master was confined in Newgate, thither she proceeded at once, and was admitted without difficulty.

"I'd better go and tell Mr. Aytoun you wish to see him," said the turnkey. "He's not very fond of company, and most times sends people away."

"If you please, don't tell him," said Susan to the man, beseechingly. "I come from his

poor wife, that's breaking her heart about him; and if I go back without seeing him, it will be such a cruel disappointment."

"Oh well," said the man, "if that's the case, come along at once; I'll say nothing about it—there," added he, "that's where he is; go in;" and Susan found herself in the presence of her master.

Mr. Aytoun, who when she entered was pacing the room like the restless denizen of the jungle when torn from his native wilds, and condemned to waste the fiery energies of his fierce nature in a prison of six feet square,—started and turned hastily round to see what unpermitted visitor had dared to intrude on his desolation. When he saw who it was, the wrath that seemed at first kindled by the unexpected interruption, changed to an expression of the coldest and haughtiest contempt. He crossed his arms and looked at her in silence.

Nothing dismayed was Susan, for she knew she came armed with truth.

"If I was what you think me, Sir," said she, "you'd have a right to look at me so, for I should deserve it; but it's hard to be condemned unheard."

"I don't condemn you, woman," said he. "You must earn your bread."

"Honestly, Sir, I must," replied Susan ; "but I'd rather want it than do a thing against my conscience."

"Conscience is very accommodating," he said, coldly.

"Mine is not, Sir," returned Susan.

"What brings you here?" inquired Mr. Aytoun. "If it's to justify yourself, it's unnecessary. Your conduct can be of no importance to me ; nor can my opinion, henceforth, be of any to you."

"You're mistaken, Sir," returned Susan. "I can't remain quiet and know myself unjustly suspected ; and in christian charity, you're bound to listen to what I have to say. If you don't believe me when I have done, I can't help it. I shall at least have the comfort of knowing that I have done my duty to myself."

"Well," said Mr. Aytoun, "what is it you want to say ? Make haste, and let me hear it as concisely as possible."

"Thank ye, Sir," replied Susan, dropping a curtsey. "I won't keep you long,—but, you know, Sir, I can't speak of myself without perhaps betraying things—about other people."

"Never mind, never mind, go on," said Mr. Aytoun ; who though he would not have condescended to ask, or even to listen, had he been

invited to do so, to any details on the subject of his wife and Mr. Seymour, was nevertheless not sorry to have some light thrown on the mystery of their intimacy.

"Well, Sir," said Susan, "you hadn't been gone more than four or five weeks, when my mistress mentioned to me, one day, when I was taking up her breakfast, that she began to think she was in the family way."

"Four or five weeks after I went away?" said he.

"Yes, Sir," returned Susan. "I'd observed that my mistress looked poorly, and couldn't eat her breakfast of a morning—so that when she told me, I wasn't so much surprised. Of course, I said how pleased you'd be, Sir; and she said you would; but, says she, 'Susan, I won't tell him yet, for fear of a disappointment.' Poor thing! I'm sure she thought more of the pleasure it would give you than of her own."

"Well, go on," said Mr. Aytoun, impatiently, afraid of betraying the *attendrissement* that Susan's words had awakened.

"Yes, Sir," continued she. "Well, my mistress, as you may suppose, naturally took to preparing for the little one she expected; and a great amusement it was to her: and all the while I used to be waiting on her at break-

fast, or dinner, or dressing her, we never talked of any thing else but what it was to have ; and how she hoped she should be able to nurse it herself ; but still when I asked her if she had mentioned it to you, she always said, 'No, Susan, I hav'n't said a word about it yet. I should so like to keep it for a surprise for him ; and presently after he comes back, just quietly to ring the bell, and desire you to bring down the baby. Poor, dear Arthur ! I can just fancy I see his dear face, when I put it into his arms, and told him it was his own.' "

"You'd better sit down, Susan," said Mr. Aytoun, turning away to draw forward a chair. "You'll be tired with standing so long."

"Thank ye, Sir," said Susan, quietly seating herself. "Well, Sir, all this went on very well for about four months ; and then a thing occurred that has caused all these misfortunes."

"What was that?" inquired Mr. Aytoun, with evidently awakened curiosity ; and thereupon Susan narrated all the particulars of Mr. Green's affair, and the visit to the police office ; Mr. Aytoun the while listening with the most intense interest.

"But what was Seymour doing at the police office?" inquired he. "Are you sure, Susan,

he did not go there to meet her? She must have known him before, depend on it."

"I'm certain, Sir, as I'm sitting here, that it was the first time she ever saw him. As for his being at the office, I heard him say in the coach, as we came home, that he was a friend of the magistrate's, and that he had gone there to speak to him; indeed, he said that he often dropt in there of a morning, when he'd nothing to do, because he liked to see human life. Neither my mistress nor I heard what his name was till he called the next day; and we did not know he was the 'Honourable,' till Betty learned it from Mrs. Parsons' maid. Mrs. Parsons had heard it from Mr. Green."

"But why, instead of encouraging the visits of a profligate man of fashion like Mr. Seymour," said Mr. Aytoun, "didn't Alicia send for me? She knew that at any risk or loss I would have flown to her assistance."

"Ah, Sir, there she was wrong; that was her mistake, Sir. She thought you'd be so angry, and so unhappy, and think it such a disgrace; and Mr. Seymour always advised her to hush it up, as it was impossible she could prove her innocence, unless she could produce the real thief."

"And who could be the real thief?" said Mr. Aytoun.

"God himself knows, Sir," answered Susan. "I have sometimes had thoughts about it, I shouldn't like to speak unless I was sure. Besides there's no telling whether the things ever came right out of Mr. Green's shop."

"You don't suspect Betty?"

"Oh no, Sir! To my certain knowledge, Betty never was out of her kitchen whilst the things were in the house."

"But to return to Seymour," said Mr. Aytoun; "Alicia must have known very well what his motives were from the beginning. She couldn't suppose he was taking all that trouble for a stranger without looking for his reward."

"I believe, Sir, at first she thought it was all good-nature and pity," replied Susan, "but after a little while she did begin to see through him; and then it was that she began to talk of going away to the country."

"She told me it was for her health," said Mr. Aytoun.

"Because she was afraid to tell you the truth, Sir," answered Susan. "But she was ill, too, with fretting, and shutting herself up in the house so much; and that was the cause of what happened directly after we arrived at Hammersmith."

"Did any body attend her?" inquired Mr. Aytoun.

"To be sure there did, Sir," answered Susan. "Mr. Perfect, the first doctor in Hammersmith. And he's been attending her again now; and saved her life, I believe; for it went very hard with her."

"Has she been ill?" inquired Mr. Aytoun, with assumed indifference.

"All but dead, Sir," replied Susan.

"However, Susan," said Mr. Aytoun, "you've certainly accounted for a great deal that I couldn't understand—at least if I'm to believe your story—"

"And I'm sure you do believe it, Sir," returned Susan.

"It's of very little consequence whether I do or not," said he; "because, at all events, it can neither excuse nor account for what happened afterwards; the confirmation of which, you know, I saw with my own eyes. She could have no motive but one in having private meetings with him in the Gardens, when she could either have received him at home, or communicated with him by letter; and when a married woman permits any other man than her husband to throw his arm round her waist, her virtue, if it's not already lost, is scarcely worth the keeping."

"All that's very true, Sir," answered Susan, "except the motive—her motive for meeting Mr. Seymour in the Gardens was, that he mightn't find out where she was; and I'm satisfied that he died without finding it out, though he took great pains about it. Poor thing! she thought to get Mr. Green's business settled without your knowing any thing of it; and then to break off all acquaintance with Mr. Seymour, before your return."

"She couldn't suppose he'd consent to that," said Mr. Aytoun, "when she had accepted such obligations from him."

"She did suppose it, Sir," said Susan. "She mayn't know the world as well as you do; but, she said, he must see that there was no use in his courting and troubling her; and that therefore she thought, when she told him so, he'd give it up. As for his putting his arm round her waist, I never saw him do such a thing before; and why he did it then, I don't know, nor she neither. She says, she saw you amongst the trees, and took hold of his arm to make him look at you; and perhaps he misunderstood her meaning—but that's gone with him to his grave; and we can never know it."

"And what then has been the object of your visit to me?" said Mr. Aytoun, after some reflection.

"To tell you the truth, Sir," answered Susan.

"And to persuade me that my wife is innocent; and that I have taken the life of a fellow creature without provocation?" and Mr. Aytoun rose from his seat, and walked hastily about the room.

"The innocent must be justified, Sir," said Susan, "come what will of it."

Still Mr. Aytoun traversed the room with an agitated step, and his countenance betrayed the conflict within him.

"Why her very manner of receiving me on my return," at last he said, suddenly stopping opposite to Susan, and fixing his eyes on her fiercely, "was enough to proclaim her guilt. Why, woman, she couldn't look me in the face."

"Very likely, Sir," replied Susan, calmly. "She knew she'd a secret that she was afraid of your finding out; and that's enough to make any wife tremble before her husband, except she's used to deceive him. Besides, Sir, what reason you had I don't know; but you were no more like yourself than she was. She fancied you'd heard something about Mr. Green; and to say the truth, so did I."

"Great God!" exclaimed Mr. Aytoun, after

an interval of violent emotion, "if she is innocent, I am a murderer!"

Susan, who had admirably maintained her firmness during the whole interview, was now ready to weep with him. "Nevertheless, Sir," said she, "the sin *must* be taken away from the guiltless, and laid where it is due."

"Where is my wife?" said he, sobbing like an infant.

"At Hammersmith, Sir, in her sick bed, where she has lain these six weeks, between life and death." And then Susan resumed her story from the time the two gentlemen had left her in the Gardens, up to the present moment; simply and naturally narrating all Alicia's anxiety for her husband's safety; and her eager pursuit of him in the hope of convincing him of the truth, and preventing the fatal meeting; and finally how she had been found in the Gardens, and conveyed to the lodgings.

There was such an impress of truth in all Susan said, and his previous experience of her character gave so much weight to her assertions, that conviction stole upon Arthur Aytoun's mind, in spite of the obstinate and passionate incredulity with which he had began to listen.

"Leave me," he said, holding out his hand

to Susan, after a violent fit of weeping, "leave me! for I've a heavy account to settle with my conscience. Go to her—go to Alicia—to my wife—my poor wronged—injured woman—tell her I must try first to make my peace with God—but that when I'm sufficiently calm, and she is well enough to come, I'll see her—and before I presume to take her in my arms, and press her to my heart, I'll kneel down at her feet, and ask her to forgive me, and to remember me when I am gone—as I soon shall be, Susan, for I shall be condemned to death, as I deserve—to remember me with pity—and to believe, that it was my great love for her, that when I thought I'd lost her, made me mad."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## THE PLEADING.

SUSAN returned to Hammersmith the herald of comfort ; but it now became necessary to account for Mr. Aytoun's continued absence ; and his unhappy wife had to learn that he would in all probability, pay the forfeit of his hasty suspicion by the sacrifice of his life.

She abandoned her country lodgings the moment she was well enough to be removed to London ; and after the first painful interview with her deeply repentant husband was over, melancholy as was the prospect before them, her grief was soothed by the conviction that she had recovered his esteem ; and his, by the certainty of her unfailing affection.

But now poor Arthur Aytoun was less willing to die. It is true, his crime sat heavy on his conscience ; but he was a young man, in

the prime of life and health ; and the reckless despair that had made him seek to sacrifice his life on the altar of his lost happiness, was now converted into horror at the image of the ignominious death that awaited him ; and a mournful regret at the idea of prematurely parting with his young wife, with whom he had looked to live so many happy years.

Poor Alicia, too, had not only the pain of so cruel a separation in perspective, but had to support, in addition, the terrible consciousness, that though guiltless in act and thought, still her own imprudence had been the cause of the catastrophe.

She procured the best advice she could on the management of her husband's case ; but it was the universal opinion that his conduct had been of so violent and aggravated a character, that there was little hope of his escape, unless the friends of the late Mr. Seymour could be induced to forego the prosecution ; a result scarcely to be looked for, from the indignation they loudly expressed at the unfair advantage Mr. Aytoun had taken.

Mr. Aytoun's solicitor waited on Colonel Alleyn, who was married to a sister of Mr. Seymour's ; and urged every motive he could think of to induce forbearance ; but without

success. Colonel Alleyn said he considered it a duty he owed, not only to his brother-in-law, but to the world in general, to make an example of a man who, regardless of the laws of honour, and of the rules established for the benefit of all, had shot his adversary like a dog, without taking the risk of a shot himself. "If conduct like Mr. Aytoun's," he said, "were permitted to pass with impunity, no gentleman could go to a meeting of the sort, without the chance of being murdered; the whole structure of modern society, as it at present stands, would be overthrown; and people would end by shooting their adversary on the first convenient opportunity without warning or witnesses."

The period for the trial was fast approaching; and there was but one resource left—one feeble hope; it rested in the possibility that the appeal which had failed from the lips of the lawyer, might be more prevailing from those of the heart broken wife. Alicia resolved to make the experiment.

She arranged her dress of plain white muslin, and her neat straw bonnet, with all the care she could; and took as much pains to look pretty, as she had been used to do in her maiden days when she expected a visit

from Arthur ; for she felt she was about to enter on a conflict wherein no weapon should be neglected. She selected an early hour ; and without any previous announcement of her intention, lest she should be denied admittance, she presented herself at Colonel Alleyn's door ; and the servant, having received no orders to the contrary, ushered her at once into the spacious and richly furnished drawing-room.

On a sofa, at one end, with a newspaper in his hand, lay Colonel Alleyn himself ; an elegant and distinguished looking man of about forty years of age. His wife, a handsome young woman apparently about thirty, was seated at a round table in the middle of the room, on which lay in careless profusion a number of splendid trifles ; together with a beautiful inlaid desk, on which with a golden pen she was writing diminutive notes on pale pink paper. On the richly flowered carpet, which vied in its glowing hues with a parterre of bright tulips, sat a lovely little girl on whose fair head perhaps seven summers might have smiled, with her arms twined round a beautiful Blenheim spaniel that was lying by her side. On another sofa at the opposite extremity of the room to Colonel Alleyn, sat an elderly

lady of a grave and dignified aspect, occupied at an embroidery frame. The whole party were in deep mourning.

As Mrs. Aytoun was announced, Colonel Alleyn and his lady both rose from their seats in evident surprise; and without advancing, each stood, he with his paper, and she with her pen in her hand, as if uncertain how to receive their visitor; whilst the old lady with her needle arrested in the air, looked over her frame with equal astonishment at the new comer.

The first *saisissement* over, Colonel Alleyn moved a few steps forward, and said, "Allow me the honour of offering you a seat;" and advanced a chair for Alicia, not far from the sofa which he had previously occupied, and on which he again placed himself. Mrs. Alleyn also resumed her seat; and drew her paper towards her, as if she considered that she had no part in the visit; and the old lady once more slowly set her needle in motion, though with her attention evidently rather fixed on the scene that was about to be acted, than on her own employment. The little girl too, whose antics with the dog had been for a moment arrested by the general disturbance, again threw her arms about its neck, and turned her back to the stranger.

"I am come, Sir," said Alicia, perceiving that Colonel Alleyn sat with a grave countenance, in which the rigid determination not to be influenced by any thing she had to say, might be easily deciphered—"I am come to ask for mercy—a wretched wife, to implore the life of her husband—of the dearest, best, and kindest of husbands, Sir, whose love for me has been the cause of his offence; and who, till the belief of my unworthiness drove him from his senses, never had a reflection cast upon his character; nor was ever guilty of an action that the most scrupulous man of honour could arraign."

"We must the more regret, Madam," replied Colonel Alleyn, in a low tone of voice, and with an unmoved countenance, "that his first deviation should have been of so fatal a character, that it is impossible to find either exculpation or excuse."

"Oh, Sir," returned Mrs. Aytoun, "don't say that! never venture to assert that there is no excuse, till you have been yourself placed in a like situation."

But Alicia had no sooner pronounced these words, than the thought occurred to her, which had not struck her before, "Is Colonel Alleyn aware that I am innocent?" If not, the speech

she had made was certainly ill calculated to appease either himself or his wife ; and indeed, the very idea of having intruded herself into their drawing-room, whilst they imagined her otherwise, overwhelmed her with dismay. Her cheeks crimsoned at the supposition, and she added hastily, " But, perhaps, Sir, you believe me guilty ?"

" Oh no," cried Colonel Alleyn, with more warmth than he had yet evinced ; whilst his wife and the elderly lady each raised her head from her occupation and echoed the " Oh no !" at the same moment. " Oh no," repeated the Colonel. " My unfortunate brother-in-law did you full justice ; and effectually vindicated your character in his conversation with me the day before the meeting."

" I thought he would not wish to leave me under so cruel an imputation," replied Mrs. Aytoun, " and I have always believed, that had he lived long enough to do it, he would have justified me to my poor husband."

" Certainly, he would," returned Colonel Alleyn. " I was not aware that Mr. Aytoun had entertained any doubts on the subject."

" Oh yes, Sir," replied Alicia. " Many things tended to mislead him ; and appearances were much against me. I have been most unfortu-

nate," she added weeping; "for in the first instance, the whole thing originated in an accusation as extraordinary as it was unfounded; and from which to this hour I have never been able to clear myself, and perhaps never may."

"Had I been aware," returned Colonel Alleyn, "that Mr. Aytoun entertained any doubts of your innocence, I should have esteemed it my duty to remove them; and if any remain, I shall be most ready to do so still. That he might consider your conduct imprudent, I could, of course, conceive."

"Yes, Sir," replied Alicia firmly, "in one point of view I was very imprudent. I had much better have braved the publicity of the first accusation than have incurred the appearance of worse guilt. But I was not imprudent in the sense in which, I believe, you used the word; and my husband's persuasion of my guilt arose out of his conviction that I never could be so. He perfectly well knew my opinions on subjects of that nature; and he knew, also, that he had left me an attached and devoted wife, whom nothing but the most entire alienation and perversion could have induced to consent to clandestine meetings with any man. Oh, Sir, there was much ex-

cuse for him ; there was indeed ! He came home after a long absence elated at the prospect of seeing me ; and he found me, as he believed, the debased minion of a stranger. A most unhappy combination of circumstances tended to deceive him—my unexpected removal into the country, for one—”

“And the whole of this unhappy combination, he, without pausing for inquiry, made Mr. Seymour pay for with his life,” rejoined Colonel Alleyn.

“No doubt, he should have paused to inquire, Sir,” returned Alicia ; “but is it unusual for men who consider themselves injured to lose their reason in their passion ? And with respect to making Mr. Seymour pay for the combination of circumstances that gave me the appearance of guilt, pardon me for saying, that Mr. Seymour’s own conduct was in effect the chief cause of that fallacious appearance. It was to avoid Mr. Seymour’s too obtrusive attention that I quitted my home ; and it was to prevent his knowing my address, that I agreed to meet him in the Gardens, instead of receiving him at my own house.”

“I cannot deny, Madam,” replied Colonel Alleyn, “that the motive of quarrel was quite sufficient to justify Mr. Aytoun in demanding

satisfaction ; but I think you will yourself find it difficult to offer any excuse for his conduct on the ground."

"None, Sir, but that he was not in his senses," replied Alicia.

"Which is an excuse every criminal may offer for every crime," answered Colonel Alleyn.

"They may, Sir, certainly," replied Alicia, "and it would therefore, I am aware, in a court of justice be dangerous to admit it. But in private, Sir, when one human being sits in judgment on another, every extenuation should be listened to. I know that by the laws of every civilised country in the world, my husband would be pronounced worthy of death ; and that the violence of his passion could not be admitted in mitigation of his sentence. But my visit is to implore you, Sir, not to look on his offence with the eye of the law, but with the eye of a fellow creature—of a fellow creature liable to the same passions and to the same errors. The judge, whilst he is pronouncing sentence on a criminal, may be conscious in his heart, that under the like degree of temptation he would himself have fallen into the same crime ; but it is his duty to be guided by the laws established ; and he is not called upon to

make his own conscience the standard of his judgment. But is it possible for you, Sir, to pursue my poor husband to his grave, without asking yourself, how you might have acted under the same provocation?"

"I cannot believe, Mrs. Aytoun," replied the Colonel, "that under any circumstances, however aggravating, I could be so unmindful of the laws of honour, as to take the unfair advantage that Mr. Aytoun did."

"Oh, Sir," said Alicia; "but remember that it was not with the view of killing his adversary and escaping himself, that Arthur did it. His eagerness to lose his own life, was quite as urgent as his desire to take Mr. Seymour's. All he seems to have aimed at was the certain death of both. Arthur's natural feeling was, that if he himself fell and Mr. Seymour survived, the injured would suffer and the offender escape, which, considering that his adversary was a much more practised shot than himself, was the probable result. If you could lay aside resentment, Sir, and consider the case quite impartially, I think you might perceive such extenuations as would make you hesitate to take a life in cold blood, in revenge for one taken in passion. You have time to reflect, Sir; Arthur had none. Besides,

to address myself to your compassion, think of the heavy chastisement you are inflicting on me. I admit it is cruel that Mr. Seymour should have paid so dearly for his fault; though his was a fault committed knowingly, and with intention; for I fear that his views, from the first, in the assistance he gave me, were not honourable. But how much heavier will be my penalty for an error committed from ignorance and timidity! How much better were it to fall as Mr. Seymour did, than to die the slow death of the broken hearted—or to drag on a wretched existence a prey to repentance and regret.”

Here Mrs. Alleyn took out her pocket handkerchief and wiped her eyes; whilst the old lady, blowing her nose sonorously, attracted the attention of the child, who looked about to see what was the matter.

“Oh, listen to me, Sir,” said Alicia, clasping her hands, “be merciful, and spare my poor husband’s life! If you knew the tender love we’ve borne each other—how happy we always were, without a sorrow in the world till this sad misunderstanding came upon us—and if you could conceive his remorse—if you could imagine what he has suffered since he has been convinced of my innocence—how he hourly

accuses himself as a murderer, and says he deserves to die ! Oh, Colonel Alleyn, you may safely leave his chastisement to his own feelings. Don't imagine that if his life is spared, he is escaping with impunity. I know that years of remorse and bitter regret are before him—but oh, don't take him from me ! Madam," she said to Mrs. Alleyn, who she saw was not unmoved, "plead for me ! I know you are injured, too, even more deeply than Colonel Alleyn—but oh, forgive ! forgive ! and if ever sorrow overtakes you, the remembrance of your mercy to the poor imploring wife that kneels to you to beg her husband's life, will help you to support your afflictions !"

As Alicia uttered these last words she fell on her knees, and with uplifted hands and streaming eyes, awaited her sentence from Colonel Alleyn. Mrs. Alleyn sat with her pocket handkerchief to her face, but she said nothing ; whilst the child, who had been gradually creeping towards Alicia, softly stole her little arm round her neck and imprinted a kiss on her cheek.

"Don't cry," she whispered ; "Papa will. He always forgives me when I'm sorry for being naughty ; and he says it's every body's duty to forgive when people are sorry—so don't cry," and she gave her another kiss.

Alicia, quite overcome by the sweet words of the innocent child, and grateful for the force of her artless pleading, threw her arms round her, exclaiming, "Oh, angel, ask him yourself! Beg for me—he never can refuse you!" and the child, climbing on her papa's knee, threw her soft arms about his neck, and with a loving kiss, whispered, "Do papa! forgive her this time; I'm almost sure she'll never do it again!"

"Archibald, my son," said the elderly lady, who had crossed the room during the latter part of the colloquy, laying her hand on Colonel Alleyn's shoulder, and speaking in a calm, dignified tone that denoted the influence she still retained—"Archibald, my son, we must forgive and spare. We mustn't take this poor young creature's husband from her. She has suffered more than enough; and we owe her a reparation for the wrong our kinsman sought to do her, in the guise of a service. Beware, lest *we* should be seeking our revenge in the guise of justice."

"Papa's going to forgive now," whispered the child to Alicia, slipping off Colonel Alleyn's knee, and kissing her cheek; "so you needn't cry any more. I always know when he's going to forgive by his face."

When the day appointed for Arthur Aytoun's trial arrived, the court assembled, and the jury were sworn—but neither prosecutor nor witnesses appeared—and he was acquitted.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## THE RECOGNITION.

ON the evening preceding Mr. Aytoun's trial, Susan was sitting at the gate of the prison in a coach, which she had been desired to have in attendance; for the purpose of bringing away certain of his clothes, and other articles which had been conveyed there for his use. Every thing had been put in, and she was waiting for her mistress to come out and join her, when she observed a man in a sailor's jacket pass and repass two or three times before the gate. Since the night of her attack in Soho Square, she had never met a person in the same costume without turning to have a second look at him; and she now thrust her head out of the window to endeavour to catch a view of the face of the person in question. When he came opposite the coach, he also

looked up at her. On his part there appeared no recognition, for he pursued his walk as before; but she felt satisfied that it was the same man that had demanded her money on that occasion. It was not only from her recollection of his face on that night that she recognised him; but her memory was aided by some previous recollection, to which she could assign neither time nor place.

After taking several turns, he at length stopt and rang the bell, and the summons being answered by the gaoler, some words passed between them, which Susan was unable to distinguish; after which the man went away.

"Can you tell me the name of that person?" inquired she of the gaoler, "or who he is?"

"I don't know," replied he. "I never see him afore to my knowledge, but once; and then he came to leave a message for Tim Swipes, as is in here for larceny."

"And what did he come for now?" inquired Susan.

"He come for the same thing," returned the man. "Just to leave a word for Tim."

The Messrs. Karl, Mr. Aytoun's employers, thought they could not do him a greater service than to supply him immediately with some active occupation, which should perforce

direct his mind from himself; and take him away, for a time, from the scene of his troubles; they therefore informed him that they had some urgent business in Russia, which they wished him to undertake; and accordingly, within a fortnight after his liberation, he again started on his travels.

Mrs. Aytoun, too, was not sorry for this arrangement. She ardently desired to leave the neighbourhood they had been living in; and she thought it better that all the bustle and inconveniences of removal should be spared to Arthur in his present state of nervous excitability. It was therefore arranged that she should fix on another house as remote as possible from the scene of their disasters; and that when the important matters were concluded, and nothing remained but what might devolve upon Betty, that she and Susan should go down to Brighton for a while, to enjoy a little change of air and recreation.

This plan was accordingly executed; and Mrs. Aytoun took a small first floor consisting of two little bedrooms and a sitting-room in the house of a Mrs. Richards on the West Cliff; who informed them, that her parlours were let for a month to a young gentleman, who with his wife and child, had come down from London a few days before.

The day after Mrs. Aytoun was established in her new lodgings, Susan happened to see the little girl who belonged to the occupants of the parlour floor playing with her doll in the passage ; and being a lover of children, she seated herself on the lower stair, and called her to come and show her her doll. The child was shy at first, and needed a little coaxing ; but after a while, she was won by Susan's good-humoured face, and sidled up to her.

"What a nice doll !" said Susan. "Who gave it you ?"

"Papa," she said, "he gave it me on my birth-day. Look, she's got a new frock on."

"A very handsome frock indeed it is," replied Susan, surveying it with some curiosity.

"And who, my dear, gave you the frock ?"

"Mamma gave me the frock," said the child. "We went out in a boat upon the sea the other day ; and the sea came into the boat and spoilt mamma's bonnet ; so she made dolly a frock out of it yesterday. "Isn't it a nice one ?"

"It is, indeed," replied Susan, still examining the frock ; "and what's your name, my dear ?"

"Nancy," replied the child.

"But your other name ?" inquired Susan.

"You've another name besides Nancy,"—but before the child could answer the question, the parlour door, which had not been previously quite closed, was suddenly thrown open, and a showily dressed young woman coming out, seized the child angrily by the arm, and dragged her into the room.

"I'll ask their name of Mrs. Richards," thought Susan,—“though, to be sure, there must be many pieces of silk made to one pattern; so I don't know why I should think any thing of it.”

The truth was, Susan's attention had been attracted by observing that the doll's frock was of the exact pattern and colour of the piece of silk which had been brought to Craven Street from Mr. Green's; and of which sundry yards were asserted to be missing. The silk which Mrs. Aytoun had had cut off by the shopman, and which she designed for a dress, was still lying in her drawer unused; so great an aversion the circumstances connected with it had inspired; and Susan, when packing up, had seen it only the day before they left London. It was an expensive silk, of French manufacture; and remarkable both in pattern and colour. She made no remark, however, on what she had seen to Mrs. Aytoun; both because the

coincidence was too trifling in itself to notice, and because she made it a rule never to allude to the unpleasant circumstances connected with that period; but the little girl was no more seen in the passage.

On the day following this slight adventure, Susan and her mistress went out together; the latter was going to bathe, and the former to attend her. They had not got three yards from the door, when Susan recollected that she had omitted bringing some article that Mrs. Aytoun would require; and she turned hastily back to fetch it. As she did so, she caught a glimpse of two heads over the parlour blinds; one of which—the gentleman's—disappeared the instant it met her eye. The lady, who was the same person that had fetched in the child the day before, continued to watch them as long as they were in sight. "I wonder why he don't like to be seen," thought Susan. "I'll certainly not forget to ask Mrs. Richards his name."

Susan rose the next morning betimes, intending after she had got the drawing-room ready, and laid the breakfast things, to run into the town and endeavour to procure some fresh eggs for Mrs. Aytoun, whose still delicate health required a nourishing diet. She had

just finished her household affairs, and was crossing the landing place to her own little room to put on her bonnet, when she heard a voice below saying, "Mind you cord that trunk well," which induced her to stop, for a moment, to look out of the staircase window, which was immediately over the door.

In front of the house stood a porter's truck; and jumping round about it, was the little girl of the parlour, with her doll in her arms, (no longer however adorned with the new silk frock,) and her bonnet and pelisse on. The child appeared in a high state of excitement, as children usually are when something new is about to happen; running in and out of the house, and chattering to the people in the passage.

Presently the owner of the truck himself appeared carrying out a largish hair trunk, which he placed on his machine; and having, successively, fetched out a portmanteau and a band box, which he added to his burthen, he put his wheels in motion and moved off; followed, at the interval of a few yards, by the child and her parents, who a minute afterwards issued from the door, habited for a journey. The lady had a good sized basket in her hand;

and the gentleman a couple of cloaks thrown over his arm.

As they walked away, with the child skipping joyfully before them, the wife made some observation to the husband, and as she did so, turned her head and looked up at Mrs. Aytoun's window, as if her remark had some relation to the occupants of the drawing-room. Susan was still looking out, wondering what could have caused their hasty departure; the lady evidently perceived her; and as it appeared to Susan mentioned the circumstance to her husband. He did not, however, turn his head to look at her; but with a hasty, and apparently involuntary impulse, he abruptly pulled his hat over his eyes, and quickened his pace.

"Very odd," thought Susan, again; "I should like to know something more about them." She then put on her bonnet, and set forth in search of her eggs, towards a street where she had seen announced in a window, "new laid eggs sold here."

The shop happened to be situated only two doors from an inn; and at the inn door stood a coach, apparently on the point of starting; and beside it, the identical porter and truck that she had seen leave the lodging a few

minutes before. Susan stationed herself at the shop door to watch their proceedings, for she felt an indefinable desire to get a view of the gentleman's face; more, perhaps, because she fancied he sought to conceal it than from any other motive.

"Hand up that 'ere trunk, now," cried a man who was packing the luggage on the roof of the vehicle.

"Put your best leg, foremost, Joey, will you?" said the coachman, coming out of the inn; "we're 'hind time already. Now gem'men," continued he, "now ladies, if you please," addressing the passengers that were standing by, and cramming the six insides into the small door of the vehicle; whilst the outsides ascended as they could to the roof.

The porter looked up the street—"Here's three more coming," said he, "what belongs to the luggage I brought;" and the lady and gentleman appeared hastening towards the inn; the former dragging the child onwards by one hand, who in the other held a bun, which she was too intent on eating to be disposed to quicken her pace. They had evidently, from the appearance of their basket, been purchasing a little provision for the journey, which had retarded their arrival.

As they reached the coach, the impatient Jehu seized the lady's arm, and hoisted her up to the back seat, and then handed up the child to her ; whilst the gentleman was engaged settling the demands of the porter.

"Now, Sir," said the coachman, "we're off," as he advanced to ascend his box, whilst the passenger set his foot upon the wheel. Susan stepped forwards, determined to get a look at him as the coach drove past.

"You're sure that portmanteau's in the boot?" said he, leaning forwards and addressing the porter, whilst the coachman was adjusting himself on his seat.

"Sure of it, Sir," replied the man.

"Lord A'mighty," ejaculated Susan, as she caught a view of his face.

"All right !" cried a voice, and away went the coach ; and as it dashed forwards, the gentleman looked down and descried Susan—their eyes met ; and the mystery was unveiled. Mr. James Hurley, for such she had learned from Mrs. Richards, on the preceding evening was the name he went by—Mr. James Hurley was the shopman who had brought the fatal goods from Mr. Green's ; and who had given evidence against Mrs. Aytoun at the police office—more than that ; she felt also perfectly

assured, that Mr. James Hurley was also the sailor that had attacked her in Soho Square, and whom she had afterwards seen inquiring for Tim Swipes at the gate of Newgate.

She had never seen him in his character of shopman, except on that fatal day; and the disguise he wore on the other occasions, had so far perplexed her memory, that though she remembered the features, she could not recall where she had seen them. But now, dressed as he had been in the first instance, the truth struck her at once; the recognition was perfect.

Her surprise was so great, that she stood for some moments staring after the coach, mute and motionless; and feeling as if the four horses were bearing away Mr. James Hurley from her sight for ever, just at the instant he had assumed an inexpressible degree of importance in her eyes.

"Did you want to go by that 'ere coach, my lass," said the ostler of the inn, perceiving the interest with which she was looking after it. "You're just a bit too late."

"What coach is it, Sir?" said she; "where's it going to?"

"It's the Portsmouth coach," answered he. "Is that the one you're waiting for?"

"No, I'm much obliged to you," she replied. "I was only looking at it;" and she turned into the shop to bargain for her eggs.

The combination of circumstances struck Susan as most singular. "This man then," she said to herself, "that Mr. Green says is his nephew, and a person of most excellent character, is a thief that walks the streets by night, in disguise; and that associates with Tim Swipes who is confined in Newgate for larceny! and what, in the name of goodness, has sent them off in such a hurry, I wonder!" and she hurried home impatient to learn what Mrs. Richards might have to tell her on the subject. "Yes," said the worthy landlady, "they're off with a flea in their ear; but, hows'ever, they've paid me my month, though they've only been in the lodgings ten days; so I've no right to grumble."

"But how came they to go in such a hurry?" asked Susan, "when they'd engaged the rooms for a month!"

"I knew nothing of it till ten o'clock last night," replied Mrs. Richards. "But when they came in to supper, they sent for me into the parlour, and said they'd heard of some relations of theirs that were staying at Margate, and that they wished to go and join

them; and asked me if I'd let them off for a fortnight's rent. But I couldn't do that, you know, when I'd turned away an old lodger of mine, because I couldn't take him in, only the day before yesterday—I hope he's not fixed yet, by the by—I've just sent Jenny to inquire for him at "the Ship"—so they paid me my month without more ado; and off they went. She's a dressy sort of body, Mrs. Hurley," added Mrs. Richards; "but I couldn't make out what they are. I asked the child one day if her papa kept a shop, and she said, 'No.' He's some sort of a clerk, I take it."

"Very likely," returned Susan. "Does the Portsmouth coach go to Margate?"

"Bless you, no," cried Mrs. Richards. "They're the opposite ends of the world—Margate's that way, and Portsmouth the other," said she, pointing east and west.

"They're gone by the Portsmouth coach, however," said Susan.

"No!" exclaimed Mrs. Richards, incredulously. "What makes you think so?"

"Because I saw them off, not a quarter of an hour ago," replied Susan; "they went away from the inn next to where I was buying my eggs; and I asked what coach it was."

"That's a good joke," said Mrs. Richards.

"They've made a mistake, depend on it, and got on the wrong coach."

But Susan had her own reasons for thinking otherwise; indeed, she had a very strong suspicion that they not only had sought to conceal their departure, and the direction of their travels; but she believed that it was nothing else in the world but Mrs. Aytoun's arrival that had routed them. However, for the present, she resolved to keep her thoughts and her discoveries to herself. She did not wish to agitate Mrs. Aytoun, or to revive unpleasant recollections, unless she was tolerably sure of attaining some satisfactory result. "I'll endeavour, when we go back to town, to find out something about this Mr. James Hurley," said she to herself; "and then, if I find it's worth looking into, I'll mention it to master when he returns."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

SUSAN INTRODUCES HERSELF TO AN ACQUAINTANCE OF  
THE READER.

Mrs. AYTOUN and Susan after remaining a month at Brighton, returned to London by the coach. When they reached Croydon, a slight accident occurred to one of the wheels, and the passengers took refuge in the inn till the damage was repaired.

There were several newspapers of various dates lying about the room they were shewn into, and Susan having taken up one of them, the following paragraph met her eye.

“The young man suspected of being concerned in the late robbery at Mr. Green’s, having been brought up for the third time before Mr. C —, has at length been finally committed to take his trial at the approaching session.”

Any thing relating to Mr. Green's shop, more especially since her late recognition of Mr. James Hurley, had assumed an interest in Susan's eyes ; and her curiosity was immediately excited to learn something more of the robbery in question.

"What," thought she, "if its Mr. James Hurley himself? I should not be surprised ; but I'll find that out, I'm determined, as soon as I get to London." And, accordingly, a few days after her arrival, having obtained leave of absence for a couple of hours, she went straight to her friend the gaoler at Newgate, with whom she had picked up a little acquaintance during the term of Mr. Aytoun's detention there, and telling him she had a particular reason for the request, begged him to give her a sight of the young man that was imprisoned for Mr. Green's business.

"Do you know any thing of him?" said he, as he led her along to the room where the prisoner was confined.

"I can't tell till I see him," she replied. "What's his name?"

"The name we've got him by is Tomkins," returned the gaoler ; "but I believe he has several aliases."

"Then he's not a young thief?" said Susan.

"He's a young man," replied the gaoler ; "and we never had him in here before ; but they say he's been at it some time. He was shopman to Mr. Green, who turned him away a little while ago, because he suspected him of robbing the till ; but he could'nt prove nothing against him, so he got off. But it seems this here robbery's been a put-up business—somebody on the premises, or as knew them well has been concerned in it ; and Mr. Green, nat'ral enough, suspects this here chap. That's he," said he, pointing to a youth about twenty, who was tossing up a halfpenny for heads or tails, with one of his companions.

"Then it's not the person I suspected," said Susan, disappointed. "Does he confess he did it ?"

"Not he," replied the man ; "he says he'd no hand in it whatsoever. But that goes for nothing, you know."

Susan had got a little time to spare, before she was obliged to return home, and she resolved to employ it in a visit to Mr. Green's shop. She had never been in it since the accusation brought against her mistress ; nor, indeed, above once before in her life ; and she thought it most likely that Mr. Green would not recognise her. She was curious to ascertain if Mr.

James Hurley was still in the haberdasher's service; and whether that was the name he went by in London, as well as at Brighton; so she resolved to spend a couple of shillings in tapes, buttons, pins, and needles; which being articles that required some nicety in the selection would afford her time to look about.

The shop being very full, and she in no immediate hurry, she seated herself in a convenient position whence she could take a survey of the different young men behind the counter; but amongst them she could not descry Mr. James Hurley. She was disappointed again; but, however, he might be out; or not yet returned from his country excursion; so she bought some trifling articles, and left the shop, resolved to look in again some day, when opportunity offered.

But she was destined to meet with Mr. James Hurley in the place of all others she would have least thought of looking for him. Mrs. Aytoun permitted each of her servants alternately to spend the Sunday out; and Susan had appointed with a friend that the first time it was her turn they would go to the evening service at the Foundling; which having at that time the attraction of a most eloquent and powerful preacher, was drawing

immense congregations, amongst whom were to be found many, of both sexes, of the highest rank and fashion.

The crowd was very great, and the contest for places almost as warm as in a theatre on the night of a new play; but Susan's friend had a sister who was one of the nurses; and by going early, and addressing themselves to her, she gave them seats in the gallery amongst the servants of the establishment.

Susan was a devout person, and during the prayers, in spite of the temptation, she looked very little about her, but whilst the organ was playing she ventured to take a survey of the scene below her. The aisles were full as well as the seats, and standing in the midst of the throng, immediately under her, who should she see, to her astonishment, but Mr. James Hurley!

"Well," thought she, "of all the places in the world, what should make him come here!" and in spite of herself, during the remainder of the service, Mr. James Hurley and the suspicions she had connected with him, drew more of her attention than the admonitions of the preacher.

As soon as the entertainment they expected is over, people are generally as eager to get out

of a place of this sort as they are to get into it ; and so it proved on this occasion. The moment the service was concluded, and the congregation having finished their last silent orison, had risen from their knees, there was a rush made towards the doors by the most impatient, who sought to get away before they were impeded by the throng. But too many were of the same mind, and consequently a considerable degree of confusion ensued ; but of all the eager and vehement strugglers below, nobody appeared to Susan to be in such a violent hurry as Mr. James Hurley. And yet, in spite of his pushing, and jostling, and working with his elbows, he did not seem to make so rapid a progress as might be expected. His efforts seemed rather to retard the progress of other people, than to advance his own ; and, at all events, they materially added to the general confusion and inconvenience. In process of time, however, the mass of human beings was pushed or struggled through the doors, and the church was nearly empty ; but Susan and her friend staid behind awhile to look at the children, and have some conversation with the nurse.

Presently, whilst they were yet standing in the gallery and looking about them, several

persons were seen re-entering the doors below, whilst the vergers and seat keepers appeared, all at once, under a considerable degree of bustle and excitement.

People ran to the places they had occupied, and stooped down to look under the benches; whilst the officials rushed up and down the aisles and through the nave, as if they were in a state of delirium—and the cry went forth, that several of the congregation had been robbed.

“Lord A’mighty,” murmured Susan to herself, as certain suspicions crossed her mind; but they were only suspicions, and therefore she said nothing. “There are more thieves in the world than Mr. James Hurley,” thought she; “but I’ll go to Mr. Green’s again to-morrow, if I can get time, I’m determined;” and she did go; for she was commissioned to make some purchases for her mistress; and as Mr. Green could not know who they were for, she considered that, in spite of the feud, her motive was sufficient to justify her in making them there without hinting her intention to Mrs. Aytoun.

As usual, the shop was very full, and the young men very busy; and, as before, she was disappointed in her expectation of seeing the person she was looking for amongst them.

However, when her purchases were completed, and she tendered a note to pay for them, the man who had served her, and who had scribbled the amount on a scrap of paper, said, "If you'll walk backwards and show this at the desk, they'll hand you the difference."

Susan obeyed; the top of a man's head appeared above a high desk, over which he was stooping—"Will you please to take this bill," said she, holding up her money and the amount; the man deliberately finished the column he was casting up, and made a note of the amount at the bottom of the page—and then he lifted up his head, and displayed to Susan's admiring eyes the features of Mr. James Hurley.

Whatever emotion Susan's face might indicate, the gentleman's certainly indicated no less. He turned first very red, and then very pale, whilst with a trembling hand he took the money and returned her the change. His eye quailed before her's; and she read in it the guilt that sat upon his soul.

Susan had now to reflect what she should do next. Had Mr. Aytoun been at home, she would not have hesitated to acquaint him with her suspicions, and the circumstances that had given rise to them; but she was unwilling to disturb her mistress's tranquillity till she had

something more certain to go upon. Alicia had never been strong since her former illnesses, and she was now again in a situation to require peculiar delicacy and consideration. "I'll go," thought Susan, after due reflection, "and tell it all to master's lawyer, Mr. Olliphant, and hear what he thinks about it ;" and accordingly she went.

Mr. Olliphant had heard the whole of the circumstances connected with Mr. Green's accusation from Mr. Aytoun, when he waited on that gentleman, to consult about his case, in Newgate ; and he had entertained a suspicion that coincided exactly with the one Susan had hinted to her master on the day she had pleaded so efficiently for her mistress. The notion of both parties was, that the lady visitor who was in the parlour when the goods were left, and who was no other than Mrs. Bloxham, must be the real criminal ; and Alicia herself, when the idea was suggested to her, inclined very much to the same opinion ; for no particular reason, except that the lady's reputation was not quite intacte in the matter of honesty, and that the character Mr. Green had given of his nephew, put him out of the category.

"All you tell me," said he, when he had listened to Susan's narrative, "is very striking

indeed ; and it would be a most desirable thing for poor Mrs. Aytoun and her husband, if we could remove the thing entirely from her shoulders, by bringing it home to somebody else ; but I don't exactly see how we are to proceed, except we attack him for his attempting to rob you in the street ; and now that's so long ago, and there being nothing but your word for it, I am afraid the character the uncle will give him will be too strong for us ; and they'll say it's a plot to clear Mrs. Aytoun, and so make her case worse than it is now. However strong the presumptions are, you can't swear that the doll's frock was cut off the same piece of silk ; nor if it were, that they came by it dishonestly. Neither can you assert that he robbed the people at the Foundling ; though in all probability he was one of the gang, from the confusion you saw him creating."

"No, I can't," replied Susan. "Besides, the thing would be to find some of the things upon him."

"Well," said Mr. Olliphant, "I'll think over the business, and see what's best to be done ; and if I require your assistance, I'll send you a penny post letter. What's your name?"

"Susan Hopley, Sir," she replied.

"Hopley, Hopley," reiterated he. "I've

heard that name before. Hopley! What is there connected in my mind with the name of Hopley?"

Poor Susan's cheeks crimsoned, and if the lawyer had looked in her face at the moment, its expression might have recalled what he was seeking to remember; but he did not. He was making notes in his memorandum book of her address, and of what she had told him; and by the time he raised his eyes to dismiss her, she had recovered from her confusion. "How hard it is," thought she, as she walked home, "to be obliged to blush for one's name, when one has done nothing to disgrace it!"

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## THE JUSTIFICATION.

ON the following day a gentleman presented himself to Susan's friend, the gaoler at Newgate, and requested an interview with Abraham Tomkins, who was in for Mr. Green's business.

"Abraham Tomkins," said he, when he had led the youth away from his companions, "I don't know whether it may be possible for me to convince you that I speak the truth—but for private reasons of my own, it is my desire to undertake your defence in the trial that's about to ensue."

Abraham Tomkins on this announcement looked a little incredulous, and very much puzzled.

"If you are guilty," said Mr. Olliphant

can only defend you according to the technicalities of the law ; taking advantage of whatever accidents or obscurities may be in your favour ; and that I will promise to do, to the best of my abilities. If, on the other hand, you are innocent, I think there is little doubt I can prove you so ; but the condition of my having any thing to do with the business at all is, that you tell me the precise truth. You must be aware," added he, "that I can have no ill design against you in seeking your confidence. Even if I were your enemy, and sought to entrap you, it would be useless. I dare say you know that you will be judged according to the evidence, and not according to any private confession I might extract from you."

"I know that, Sir," replied Abraham ; but still looking suspicious.

"And observe," rejoined Mr. Olliphant, "I don't pretend that I am interfering in this business for your benefit. I do it for ends of my own, though you will be the gainer. My object is to ascertain the truth, which I have a particular interest in knowing ; and I make it your interest to tell it me, by engaging to undertake your defence, to the best of my abilities ; and you know it is impossible for me to do that effectually, unless I am acquainted with the facts."

"Are you a lawyer, Sir?" inquired Abraham.

"Yes," replied Mr. Olliphant, "and it is for the benefit of a client of mine I am acting."

"I'd no hand in it, Sir," said Abraham.

Mr. Olliphant looked sharply in the lad's face, and he thought he was speaking the truth.

"I hadn't indeed, Sir," replied the young man; "and I could prove an alibi; only the witnesses I have to bring forward wouldn't be believed."

"You were in bad company, then?" said Mr. Olliphant.

"It warn't very good," replied Abraham.

"But I may contrive to make their testimony available," rejoined the lawyer; "so tell me where you really were."

"At Isaac Lecky's, the Jew," replied Abraham.

"You might have been in a better place, assuredly," returned Mr. Olliphant; who from this unreserved avowal was the rather disposed to think the young man was telling the truth.

"I was there from eight o'clock in the evening till ten the next morning," added Abraham, "and I never heard a word of the business, till Isaac himself told me of it."

"And does Isaac know who did it?" inquired Mr. Olliphant.

"No, he doesn't," returned the lad. "And yet, may be, he does; there's no saying. He swore he didn't; but he made me drunk, and kept me there all night; and perhaps it was that I mightn't be able to prove an alibi."

"Is he acquainted with any of the young men in Mr. Green's establishment?" inquired the lawyer.

"Not that I know of," answered Abraham; "but there's no telling who he's acquainted with."

"Do you think I could get any thing out of Lecky, if I were to go to him?" asked Mr. Olliphant.

"If you could make it his interest," replied the lad. "But it's more like to be his interest not to peach, when there's no suspicion. He might blow up a walable hand by it. He'd ask a pretty round sum before he'd sing, I take it."

"Have you any suspicion yourself who did it?" inquired the lawyer.

"I can't say I have," replied Abraham.

"Are there none of the young men in the shop that keep bad company?"

"Not one, that I know of," answered the lad. "Mr. Green's the partick'lerest master as is about young men. He turned me off

for next to nothing ; and that it was threw me out of employment ; else I shouldn't be here on suspicion now."

"I thought you robbed the till?" said the lawyer.

"The till had been robbed before I touched a stiver out of it," answered Abraham ; "but I just borrowed half-a-crown to go half price to the play, and so I got the credit of taking all that had been missed."

"Then there's undoubtedly a thief on the premises?" said Mr. Olliphant.

"That's certain," said Abraham, "but he's a close 'un whoever he is.—You might go to Isaac," added he, after a little consideration, "and try him ; he might peach ; there's never no telling."

"I will," said the lawyer, "and before the trial you shall see me again."

Mr. Olliphant felt no doubt of the lad's having told him the truth ; and every thing he had heard tended in his mind to the confirmation of Susan's suspicion. There was, as Abraham said, a thief on the premises, "and a close 'un," who, shielded by the confidence reposed in him, had been committing the most daring robberies ; and every circumstance pointed to Mr. James Hurley as the criminal.

Isaac Lecky, who was a known receiver of stolen goods, and connected with half the thieves about London, was a man who nevertheless kept up a tolerable outside of honesty in his front shop, which was situated near St. Martin's Lane, and had the appearance of a decent pawnbroker's. No man was more plausible ; and his character amongst his customers, who were in the habit of pawning their Sunday clothes on Monday morning, to redeem them on Saturday night, was that of a fair-dealing man. But there was a certain back-door, opening on an obscure court, known to customers of another description, that had it a tongue to speak withal, could have told many a curious tale.

Thither, at all hours of the night, stole visitors apparently of the most various grades. Gentlemen, dressed in the very extreme of the fashion, with large whiskers or moustachios, shirt-collars that almost reached their eyes, and gilt chains round their necks, to which nothing was appended. Then there were demure-looking, silent, and tolerably well-dressed men, who appeared to belong to no class at all ; but who did a little business in a quiet way, and picked up a great deal of useful information. Their grave and respectable appearance rendered

their testimony to the exemplary virtues of any of their acquaintance who happened to be unpleasantly situated, especially valuable and efficient. Footmen in shabby worn-out liveries, whose last place had unfortunately spoiled their characters; and now and then, one in more gorgeous attire, who, like the golden chrysalis, was in a state of transition. Beggars, sailors, dustmen, chimney-sweepers, were all to be seen in their turns at Mr. Lecky's back-door, and occasionally, though less frequently, women. But they were customers to whom the cautious Jew gave little encouragement; as many as pleased were welcome to his front-door, but he preferred reserving the more sacred entrance for visitors of harder metal.

Isaac Lecky was a man who looked like an anasarcaous tallow candle—so puffy, so featureless, so white. As unlike as possible to Duncan, “who had so much blood in him,” Mr. Lecky appeared to have none at all—his arteries and veins seemed to be filled with serum. His hair was of a dirty-looking shade of light brown; his eyes grey, small, and piggish, whilst his diminutive nose, and small pursed-up mouth were scarcely discernible between the pair of colourless tumid cheeks that bor-

dered them. In short, Mr. Lecky, though still calling himself a Jew, and adhering pretty closely to his own people, as he professed to consider them, had so deteriorated from the type of his ancestors by the frequent alloy of Christian blood they had grafted into the stock, that he had lost all the distinguishing characteristics of those generally handsome infidels; whilst nature, probably thinking that he could make out no good title to the features of any other sect, had evaded the difficulty by giving him an assortment that would have been unanimously repudiated by every denomination whatsoever. His dress, consisting of a well-brushed, but rather thread-bare black coat, with drab continuations and gaiters, had an air of being put on with great precision; and the handkerchief round his neck, which considering the region wherein he dwelt, showed a paler tinge of yellow than might have been expected, was folded over his breast with particular neatness, and attached to his shirt by a paste pin, that many of his front-door customers venerated as a real diamond.

When Mr. Olliphant stepped into the shop, Isaac, who was standing behind his counter sorting his tickets, cast upon him a glance of curiosity; for the well-attired, well-fed, cheer-

ful-looking lawyer, had by no means the air of a person likely to have dealings with the pawn-broker.

"You're Isaac Lecky, I presume?" said Mr. Olliphant.

"The same, Sir, at your service," replied Isaac.

"Mr. Lecky," continued the lawyer, "I've a little business with you of a private nature; but I should like to be out of the way of interruption whilst we talk it over. But perhaps you've nobody to take care of your shop."

"Oh yes, Sir," answered Lecky, "I can get my daughter to do that for me;" and on his opening a door and calling "Jessy," a handsome girl of about eighteen or twenty, with features of so decidedly Jewish a type, that it was impossible to look at her without entertaining the most painful doubts respecting the prudence of the late Mrs. Lecky, descended from an upstairs apartment, and in spite of her green silk dress, and large gold ear-rings, unhesitatingly placed herself behind the counter.

"This way if you please, Sir," said Mr. Lecky bowing, and with a very demure aspect preceding Mr. Olliphant into the small parlour that was behind the shop, and from which it was separated by a glass-door; a view through

which he ensured for himself by the seat he selected, after presenting one to his visitor.

As soon as he was seated, he placed his hands between his knees, which he closed firmly on them to hold them fast, as if it were necessary in the presence of good company to suppress any evil habits they might have acquired, or restrain their propensity for picking and stealing; and then with his body bent forwards, his mouth pursed into its smallest dimensions, and his small grey eyes inclined to the earth, but still catching ever and anon a glance at Mr. Olliphant's features, he waited silently till that gentleman should be pleased to open his communication.

This was not instantly; for the lawyer, though well acquainted with Isaac Lecky's reputation, had never seen him before; and he could not help surveying with some curiosity and interest the strange blank face he had before him, so unlike what he had expected; and he had also to consider what was the most likely way of gaining his point without doing mischief; for he did not wish to betray his own suspicion of Hurley, unless he were pretty sure of Isaac's co-operation, as such a disclosure might only serve to put the other on his guard.

"The fact is," said Mr Olliphant, "to come

to the point at once—you have it in your power to do me a service, Mr. Lecky—whether you will be willing to oblige me, remains to be seen.”

Mr. Lecky bent his person slightly forward, but it was a cautious bend that took care not to promise too much.

“The case is this. There is a young lad in trouble about a robbery, with which I happen to know he had no concern. For reasons, it is not necessary to explain, a client of mine is deeply interested in the fate of the boy, and has committed the charge of his defence to my management.—You know the lad I mean, of course?”

Mr. Lecky, however, called up an unconscious look.

“Abraham Tomkins,” said Mr. Olliphant, and paused for an observation from the other side; but Isaac preserved his attitude and his silence.

“Now, as I know, as you do also, Mr. Lecky, that the young man is innocent, I am desirous of doing the best I can in the business, and I want you to assist me. Have you any objection?”

“None, Sir, no objection whatever,” replied Mr. Lecky; “but what can *I* do?”

“In the first place, you know the boy was

here on the night the robbery was committed, from eight at night till ten the next morning."

"Was he, Sir?" said Mr. Lecky, "that's more than I know, I'm sure; but I don't say he wasn't; for it's a thing I'm not likely to keep in my mind so long; the human faculties being so imperfect."

"He most assuredly was," returned Mr. Olliphant, nodding his head significantly, as if he knew more than he avowed; "that I have found the means of ascertaining—to my own satisfaction, at least. But I own I'm not so clear of being able to satisfy the jury on that point, unless you'll give me your assistance."

"What can I do, Sir?" said Mr. Lecky, again; "I'm sure I couldn't take upon myself to swear to such a thing. It's at least three months ago now, since it happened; and I couldn't charge my memory with what took place on any particular night. I've so many people coming here, backwards and forwards, that I couldn't undertake to say the next week, let alone months, on what night I saw them. It's not possible, Sir. You must see that yourself—the human faculties being so imperfect, Sir; that of memory in pertick'lar; and since the late Mrs. Lecky's death, I can't say mine has ever been what it was afore."

“That’s to be regretted,” gravely answered Mr. Olliphant. “However, there are circumstances which don’t easily escape the most treacherous memory; and as you first informed the lad of the robbery yourself, the morning after it was committed, you must have been perfectly aware at the time that he was not the thief. Now though the exact date might escape you, I should think that circumstance could not.”

“Lord, Sir,” replied the Jew, “you forget that I may have mentioned the same thing to twenty people, at least, within an hour after I heard of it myself. It was natural I should speak of it to whoever I saw, a thing like that—that was making a noise. I couldn’t pretend, I’m sure, to say who I mentioned it to, and who I didn’t.”

“Then you really can’t give me any information on the subject?” said Mr. Olliphant.

“None whatever, Sir,” said Isaac. “I wish I could, I’m sure. But the human memory, as I observed before—”

“I’d give any body fifty pounds that would put me in the way of finding out the truth,” said Mr. Olliphant, taking up his hat, and speaking rather to himself than addressing Isaac; and so saying he arose to take his leave.

"Cash down, Sir?" said Mr. Lecky, without changing his attitude, or moving a muscle of his countenance.

"Cash down," replied the lawyer.

"And nobody know where you got your information?" said the Jew. "All close?"

"All close," said the lawyer.

"Sit down, Sir, if you please," said Isaac.

Affairs had reached this crisis, when through the glass-door, a woman with a parcel in her hand was seen to enter the shop.

"Excuse me a moment, Sir," said the pawn-broker, "but my daughter's not used to the shop; I must just step and see what that person wants;" and he arose and quitted the room, closing the glass-door after him.

He had scarcely done so, when Mr. Olliphant heard some one knocking with their knuckles at the back door, which was immediately beyond the room he was sitting in, and only separated from it by a very narrow passage. The summons not being answered, it was repeated more impatiently; upon which the lawyer arose, and opening the door of the room, looked out.

"Why the devil don't you open the door?" said a voice without. "Don't you know the bell's broke?" And Mr. Olliphant, who had

no objection to being a little initiated into the mysteries of Isaac's establishment, obeyed the summons; and by drawing back a couple of strong bolts, and turning a heavy key, gave admission to the stranger.

"What the h— do you keep one so long at the door for?" said a man entering abruptly. "I tugged at the bell last night till I broke it." But having by this time reached the room, where it was lighter, he perceived that he was addressing his objurgations to a stranger. "I beg your pardon," said he; looking surprised at the sort of person he found himself so unexpectedly *tête à tête* with.

He was rather a genteel looking young man about five or six and twenty; wearing a blue coat, grey trowsers, and spotted waistcoat; and on finding that it was not Isaac who had admitted him, he stood in the middle of the room, as if uncertain what to do.

But before there was time for further explanation, the glass-door opened, and the Jew himself returned, with an apology in his mouth for detaining his visitor; but on perceiving the new comer, the words were arrested on his lips. He looked at one, and at the other, and at the door of the room which Mr. Olliphant had shut after letting in the stranger; and

seemed to think that the person he saw before him, was either but the semblance of a man, or must have ascended through the floor.

"I wanted to speak to you particularly," began the young man.

"Mr. John Brown," said Isaac, hastily interrupting him as he was about to speak, "I'm at this moment particularly engaged. Call to-night, to-morrow, next night—there's no use fixing a time."

"But I must speak to you," said the young man. "I was here last night tugging at the bell for an hour. I suppose you were out."

"I was," replied the Jew. "It was a festival; and I and my daughter supped from home. But my dear Sir, Mr. Brown, as I observed before, I'm particularly engaged—some other time—some other time—" and he urged the stranger towards the door.

"I must speak one word to you," said the young man, keeping fast hold of Isaac by the breast of his coat; and they vanished from the room together and closed the door.

The conference was not long, and having dismissed his visitor, Mr. Lecky returned, casting up his eye as he entered to the broken wire of the bell, which he appeared not to have before known was disabled.

"Now," said Mr. Olliphant, getting impatient to settle his business with the Jew, and be gone—"as we had agreed, fifty pounds—cash down—and nobody know who gave the information."

"I'm sure, Sir," said Mr. Lecky, resuming his former attitude, "if it had been in my power, I should have been most happy. But as I said before, the human faculties are so imperfect, especially that of memory, that it's not possible to remember the particulars of a thing that happened so long since."

"But my good Mr. Lecky," said Mr. Olliphant, smiling—"we had got over that stage of the business some time ago; and had advanced far into the next. You know, when you were called away, you had just agreed to give me the information I want, upon the abovenamed conditions. Cash down, and all close."

"I, Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Lecky with apparent astonishment. "Not I, Sir. How could I agree to tell what I don't know? I'm sure, Sir, I know no more about the business than the babe unborn."

Mr. Olliphant began to suspect that the Jew's memory really was in some degree defective; for that he had been on the point of communicating the secret when he left the

room, he could scarcely doubt. So he renewed his offer, and described his object more explicitly; but by no effort could he bring Isaac Lecky up to the point he had got him to before. There certainly appeared to exist some strange hiatus in his faculties; and the lawyer finally quitted the house, uncertain whether the Jew had altered his mind, or whether he had mistaken his intentions; and having only gained one step by his motion, which was a more confirmed belief in Abraham Tomkins's innocence.

It wanted now but two days to the trial; and in order to fulfil his promise to Abraham, he put his case into the hands of a barrister of his acquaintance, with a request that he'd do what he could for him; and he desired Susan to be in attendance, in case any thing should occur to make her testimony desirable. "But I fear," he said, "there's nothing to be done. Mr. James Hurley is, I dare say, what you take him to be; but we have nothing but your suspicions to advance, and can show no sort of grounds for an accusation. However, he'll dish himself in time, no doubt; and then the truth about Mrs. Aytoun's business, if he'd any hand in it, may perhaps come out."

When Abraham Tomkins learned that the Jew refused to remember that he had passed

the night of the robbery at his house, he said, "Then he's been concerned in the business; or at any rate knows who was; and that was what he kept me there for, and made me drunk."

The circumstantial evidence against Abraham Tomkins produced on the trial, was but slight; but the presumption against him was very strong.

He had been, for some time, suspected of keeping bad company; articles of value were frequently missing from the shop, in a way nobody could account for, and the till had been repeatedly robbed, to a greater or less amount. At length, he was detected in abstracting half-a-crown, and consequently pronounced guilty of all the other defalcations; but nothing was found on him. However, he lost his place and his character, and had been heard to say, "that as Mr. Green had taken the bread out of his mouth, he would make him pay for it." A maid-servant of Mr. Green's also asserted, that he had been tampering with her to let him visit her of an evening, and that she had told her master she was sure Abraham Tomkins had some bad design; and that if any robbery were committed she should know who did it.

One of the first witnesses called was Mr.

Green himself, but the court was informed that being dangerously ill of a fever, he was unable to attend; but that his nephew, who was his book-keeper and foreman, and knew more of the business than he did himself, was in court, and ready to appear for him.

Mr. Edward Green was therefore called into the witness-box, and to Mr. Olliphant's astonishment, the young man whom he had himself admitted through Isaac Lecky's back-door, only two days previously, answered to the summons. "Mr. John Brown!" said he to himself, "Mr. John Brown, then, turns out to be Mr. Edward Green!"

"Here's a bit of paper for you, Mr. Olliphant," said a man, tapping him on the shoulder—"a woman gived it me that's waiting outside."

It was a request from Susan that he would come and speak to her.

"That's him, Sir," said she, "just gone in."

"Which do you mean?" inquired he.

"The last witness they fetched in, Sir," said Susan. "That's Mr. James Hurley."

"You're certain?" inquired Mr. Olliphant.

"Quite positive, Sir," said Susan.

"Did he see you?" inquired the lawyer.

"No," replied Susan; "I took care he

shouldn't; and that's why I wouldn't send in to you before."

"It's all right;" said the lawyer. "I think we have him now."

And they had—presently afterwards when the counsel for Abraham Tomkins was called upon for the defence, his first step was to demand that the late witness, Mr. Edward Green, alias James Hurley, alias John Brown, should be taken into custody; and a warrant of search immediately granted.

In a lodging near the Haymarket, dwelt the lady who went by the name of Mrs. James Hurley, and the little girl that Susan had seen at Brighton; and there was discovered quite enough to establish Mr. Edward Green as the delinquent, not only with respect to the affair immediately under investigation, but in several others; especially, the robbery lately committed at the Foundling. The doll's frock, the remnants of a bonnet splashed with sea water, and a spencer still in tolerably good repair, were also found, and sworn to by Mr. Green and his shopmen, to be cut from the identical piece of silk that had been sent to Mrs. Aytoun.

Finally, she was triumphantly vindicated by the criminal's confession; and Mr. Aytoun had the consolation of feeling, that however much

he had to lament the consequences of his own precipitation, not the faintest cloud remained to obscure the brightness of his wife's reputation.

"It's plain enough," said the lawyer to Mr. Aytoun, when on that gentleman's return they discussed these strange events—"it's plain enough what it was that confounded the worth of Isaac's human faculties. By the by," added he, "that's a capital girl, that servant of yours"—Hopley, Hopley—I always forget to ask her where she came from."

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.





